This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

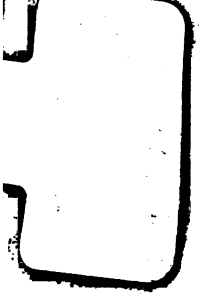
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

3 3433 08162717 0



Y13X
(Fichte)

m

1. Name Fichte

MEMOIR

OF

JOHANN GOTTLIEB FICHTE.

BY

WILLIAM SMITH.

BOSTON:
JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.
1846.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1846, by
JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY THURSTON, TORRY & EMERSON,
31, Devonshire Street.

PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

But few words need be wasted in introducing to American readers a man so great and self-sufficing as Fichte was: so thoroughly able to speak for himself. Only a kindly sentence or two, to make us feel perfectly at home in his company, and to mark the particular coincidence of his genius with our present literary wants and prospects.

We shall welcome him because he was a man of action: and we need him because he was a man of thought. Nowhere can we find so grand a specimen of complete harmony of speculation and practice, such a healthy, sinewy nature, constantly proving all his problems by the heroism of daily life. Goethe spent eighty years in self-culture: Schiller wore himself out with asking Pilate's question, and his results were always æsthetic: Schelling rebuked Fichte for deserting the scholar's province, and carrying out speculation to its ultimates. But that very idea was the best in Fichte's possession — if it did not rather possess him — namely, that the moral order of the Universe was the object of life. He stood ready to prove this by syllogism or by sacrifice: not only by an irreproachable character, but by deeds of great note in their time. And these were not forced upon him by circumstance or position, or merely assumed as stints, but they were elements of him and of his system: the necessary results of the man, as much as

the tone and contour of his features. Therefore we do not consider him notable merely because, while the best scholars of Germany were elaborating morphologies and constructing syntheses of Nature, he humanized life in Universities, made virtue the rage, set all the students at Napoleon, and was so adroit at revolutionizing Germany, that he got his name on the emperor's private proscription-list: but because his system of thought would have compelled him to do the best things in any era, because, in short, he represented the union of remote abstraction with earnest reality. He was knowledge, and he was power: he thought the subtlest thoughts into deeds: he condensed that German gas — a result which worthy men among us still consider to be too much for the most ponderous hydraulics.

Then while we smile most shrewdly at some of his metaphysical statements, and the Fichtean Egoism is dismissed with general merriment, and flourish of Scotch and English reviewers' trumpets, we still have a suspicion that all is not right, and that it must be the man himself which makes his own statement appear so wretched. Fichte had his Theory of the Universe: a German would sooner be without his pipe than a compact, pocket cosmo-ontology. We all construct the same, with more or less absurdity, by the same instinct that sets the beaver to build his dam: and we are ready to swear by it stoutly to every passenger. But the first dun, or new music, or outrage upon misery, or note of reform, makes us suddenly serious: we drop the cap and bells, and the noblest theory of the universe is demonstrated in the play or the gravity of our deeds. Setting aside Fichte's bare ontological statement, which after all was only a chance stone which he made his fulcrum, we find the grandest use and meaning in his moral system,

and all the merit of practical consistency. His keen analysis of consciousness, his lofty development of individual Freedom, his tender and religious admission of the Infinite Will, his stern and yet inspiring representations of Duty and Virtue, which no young man can read without longing with tears to be good and pure and just,—all these noble utterances of that strong and honest spirit, will be the common property of men's hearts, long after his system of Idealism, which he himself so well refuted, and the sharp irony of his critics, and the spleen of his traducers, become curiosities of literature, and morbid preparations in the museum of some future historian of philosophy.

The most elaborate satire of Fichte's Idealism was the "Clavis Fichtiana," by Jean Paul. He evidently understood him, and yet he did not do him justice, because the satire identifies Fichte with his Egoistic Idealism, which may be thrice demolished, without involving in the ruin Fichte's special and only worth. Thus, among other clever things, Jean Paul writes with German bluntness: "it struck me (said I, as I glanced slightly over my system, during a foot-bath, and gazed significantly at my toes, whose nails they were paring) that I am the All and Universe; one cannot be more in the world, than the world itself, and God, and the spirit-world too. Only I ought not to have sat so long a Time (which is another work of mine) without concluding, that I am the *natura naturans*, and the Demiurgus and Agent of the universe. I am now like that beggar who, waking out of a drunken sleep, found himself all at once a king. What a Being, which, itself excepted, (for it is always *becoming*, and never is) makes every thing, my absolute All-breeding, foaling, yeaning, hatching, casting, whelping, bearing I!" * And again,

* "If I saw my oldest friend, I should only say, I = I. If I saw Fichte,

in a higher strain, but with still less justice in view of the fine moral eloquence of Fichte, Jean Paul writes: "all the enthusiasm he permits me is logical: all my Metaphysics, Chemistry, Technology, Nosology, Botany, Entomology, subsists only in the old maxim, *know thyself*. I am not only, as Bellarmin says, my own Redeemer, but also my own Devil, Death and Knout-master. The practical reason itself (that only sacred shew-bread for a hungry philosophical David) hardly sets me a going, since, after all, I can only benefit somewhat my I, and no one further. Love and admiration are void, for like St. Francis, I press to my *soi disant* breast nothing but a maiden rolled together of snow. Around me is a wide, petrified humanity: in the dark, unpeopled stillness no love glows, no admiration, no prayer, no hope, no aim. I, so all alone, nowhere a single throb of life, nothing around me, and besides myself nothing but *nothing*, am only conscious of my lofty Un-consciousness; within me the dumb, blind working Demogorgon is concealed, and I am it. So I emerge from eternity, so I proceed into eternity! And who knows me now and hears my sorrow? I. Who knows me and hears it to all eternity? I." *

Schiller also, in his correspondence with Goethe, calls Fichte "the great I," and says: "To him, the world is only a ball which the I has thrown forth, and which it again catches in the act of reflexion! Thus 'tis said he has

---

I being the Castor and he the Pollux, and both of us only existing by an alternate immortality of projection, I should only indulge myself in uttering, *Soyons amis, Auguste.*"

* After this, it is amusing to see Mad. de Staël, with her glib, Parisian goose-quill, also snatch a blow at the "Doctrine of Science." She says quite conclusively, "nature and love lose all their charm by this system; for if the objects that we love are only the work of our ideas, we may regard man himself as the great Bachelor of the Universe."

really declared his godhead, as we lately expected." And yet the pulse of Schiller's heart was deeply stirred by the "Nature of the Scholar," the "Destiny of Man," the "Addresses to the German Nation," through all of which runs Fichte's idea of the moral order of the Universe, and the sacredness of being called upon to exist. After Fichte had dropped his unusual terminology, and had somewhat popularized his system, he was accused of making himself felt and understood at the expense of his logic. Thus the third part of the "Destiny of Man," which is the most popular development of his idea, was said to contradict the first part, and either to destroy his system, or to gain therefrom an esoteric meaning. It may be, that in writing his lofty invocation to the Divine Will, which occurs in the third part, he virtually abandons his idealism. We are more inclined to consider the latter as explained by his highest moments and clearest statements.

The charge of Atheism, seems to have arisen from his proposition, that the conception of personality subjects the Infinite Will to limitation. Any conception of the Deity which we may entertain, must necessarily be finite, even when it is a conception of His infinity. Our conception does not become less finite when we add the element of personality, even if we call Him an infinite Person. With the highest and most devout abstraction, we still only approach the God of our own conceptions: and the men of the greatest genuine faith, have always been accused of Atheism, because they dared not erect a finite conception into a dogmatic statement with respect to the Infinite Nature. There has always been this feud between the philosophers and the theologians: the latter making God after man's image, the former declaring that the intellect can neither name nor represent Him. And all the while,

the earnest men of both parties repose upon the same Infinite Will, and aspire to the same source of their common life and thought. A downright Atheist would be, to speak rather paradoxically, a perfect God-send. The best thinkers of Germany absolved Fichte from this paltry charge, but nevertheless respectable fathers of families rather eschewed his society. But no man was ever more penetrated with the Divine Presence, or ever made loftier statements of that which, absolutely, must always be ineffable. His speech becomes transfigured when he meets the theme, his words conquer when he tries to say that he can say nothing.

It must be admitted, that Fichte was misunderstood, partly because he exaggerated his own positions. He conciliated no one, and disdained to make his wares marketable. He threw out the truth which he had, in huge, rude masses, and whoever thought it was worth taking, was welcome to all he could retain. He was the servant of truth, and never trifled nor blasphemed, for he saw the truth too clearly. But this very superiority rendered him sometimes daring in the form of his statements. His simplest metaphysical propositions were hirsute and shocking; as he left the lecture room men looked to see whether or no he were a new avatar of the Enemy. Perhaps he secretly enjoyed the turmoil which his needless singularity created, and loved to aggravate the Philistines who sought to catch him in his talk. Yet much that was called arrogance was only positiveness of knowledge, and his blunt vanity was only sincerity of conviction. Still we may fairly censure him, because the earnest thinker is not only bound to receive truth with reverence and self-denial, but to proclaim it in love. He must win men over to its worship.

This excellent Memoir will properly establish Fichte

among us. The English edition contains also a translation of one of his finest works, the "Nature of the Scholar." We look to see the success of this Memoir demand a republication of that also. It will be a seasonable word to our scholars, its lofty requisitions will deepen their earnestness, its merciless analysis will abolish trifling, its simple yet smiting appeals will cause them to venerate their vocation. We shall welcome Fichte because he is in earnest, and because he grapples with the meaning of life, learns it by heart, and makes it luminous. He sets every man to the most decisive work, and shows him how his deeds tell for God and advance the order of the Universe. Were his writings domesticated here, they would materially assist us in the sólution of many of the impending questions which now appear above our horizon.* They would at least be welcome, because the words of a deep and powerful thinker, increase the power and accuracy, and develope the capacity, of thought.

WATERTOWN, March 1, 1846.

---

* His "Critique of all Revelation," is an attempt to state the genuine grounds of Faith, the province of Miracle, &c.

CONTENTS.

PREFACE TO THE AMERICAN EDITION 3

MEMOIR.

BIRTH AND EDUCATION 14
LETTERS TO JOHANNA RAHN 27
CRITIQUE OF ALL REVELATION 55
DOCTRINE OF SCIENCE 81
PROFESSORSHIP AT JENA 96
SUNDAY LECTURES 105
CHARGE OF ATHEISM 118
NATURE OF THE SCHOLAR 140
OPPOSITION TO NAPOLEON 151
SICKNESS AND DEATH 154

MEMOIR

OF

JOHANN GOTTLIEB FICHTE.

At the time of the great religious division, when Germany was torn by internal factions, and ravaged by foreign armies, — when for thirty years the torch of devastation never ceased to blaze, nor the groan of misery to ascend on high, — a skirmish took place near the village of Rammenau, in Upper Lusatia, between some Swedish troops and a party of the Catholic army. A subaltern officer who had followed the fortunes of Gustavus was left on the field severely wounded. The kind and simple-hearted villagers were eager to render him every aid which his situation required, and beneath the roof of one of them, a zealous Lutheran, he was tended until returning health enabled him either to rejoin his companions in arms, or return to his native land. But the stranger had found an attraction stronger than that of war or home — he continued an inmate in the house of his protector, and became his son-in-law. The old man's other sons having fallen in the war, the soldier inherited his simple possessions, and founded a family whose generations flowed on in peaceful obscu-

rity, until its name was made illustrious by the subject of the following memoir.

The grandfather of the philosopher inherited from his predecessor, along with the little patrimonial possession, a small trade in ribbons, the product of his own loom, which he disposed of to the inhabitants of the village and its vicinity. Desirous that his eldest son, Christian Fichte, should extend this business beyond the limited sphere in which he practised it himself, he sent him as apprentice to Johann Schurich, a manufacturer of linen and ribbons in the neighboring town of Pulsnitz, in order that he might there learn his trade more perfectly than he could do at home. The son conducted himself well during his apprenticeship, rose high in the esteem of his master, and was at last received into the house as an inmate. He there succeeded in gaining the affections of Schurich's daughter. This attachment was for a long time kept secret, in deference to the pride of the maiden's father; but his prejudices having been overcome, young Fichte brought home his bride to his native village, and with her dowry he built a house there, in which some of his descendants still follow the paternal occupation.

Johann Gottlieb Fichte was their first child, and was born on the 19th of May, 1762. At his baptism, an aged relative of the family, who had come from a distance to be present at the ceremony, and who was revered by all men for his wisdom and piety, foretold the future eminence of the child; and as death soon after set his seal upon the lips which had uttered

the prophecy, it became invested with all the sacredness of a deathbed prediction. Their faith in this announcement induced the parents to allow their first-born an unusual degree of liberty, and by thus affording room for the development of his nature, the prediction became in some measure the means of securing its own fulfilment.

The boy soon displayed some characteristics of the future man. He seldom joined the other children in their games, but loved to wander forth in the fields, alone with his own thoughts. There he would stand for hours, his eyes fixed on the far distance, until he was roused from his trance and brought home by the shepherds, who knew and loved the solitary and meditative child. His first teacher was his own father, who, after the business of the day was over, instructed him in reading, and told him the story of his own journeyings in Saxony and Franconia. He was an eager scholar, soon mastered his Bible and Catechism, and even read the morning and evening prayers in the family circle. When he was seven years of age, his father, as a reward for his industry, brought him from the neighboring town the story of Siegfried. He was soon so entirely rapt in this book, that he neglected his other lessons to indulge his fancy for it. This brought upon him a severe reproof; and finding that this beloved book stood between him and his duty, he with characteristic determination resolved to destroy it. He carried it to the brook which ran by his father's house, with the intention of throwing it into the water, but long he hesitated before accomplishing his first act of

self-denial. At length he cast it into the stream. No sooner, however, did he see it carried away from him, than regret for his loss triumphed over his resolution, and he wept bitterly. His father discovered him, and learned the loss of the book, but without learning the reason of it. Angry at the supposed slight cast upon his present, he punished the boy with unwonted severity. As in his childhood, so also in his after life, did ignorance of his true motives often cause Fichte to be misunderstood and misrepresented. When this matter had been forgotten, his father bought him a similar book, but the boy would not accept of it, lest he should again be led into temptation.

Young Fichte soon attracted the notice of the clergyman of the village, who, perceiving his talents, resolved to promote their development, and if possible to obtain for him a scientific education. An opportunity of doing so soon presented itself. A guest of the Freiherr von Miltitz, a neighboring proprietor, was desirous of hearing a sermon from the pastor of Rammenau, who had acquired some reputation as a preacher, but had arrived too late in the evening to gratify his wishes. Lamenting his disappointment, he was told that there was a boy in the village whose extraordinary memory enabled him to repeat faithfully any address which he had once heard. Little Gottlieb was sent for, and astonished the Freiherr and his guests by his minute recollection of the morning's discourse, and the earnestness with which he repeated it before them. The Freiherr determined to make further inquiries respecting this extraordinary child; and the friendly pastor having

found the opportunity he wished, persuaded him to undertake the charge of the boy's education. The consent of the parents having been with difficulty obtained — for they were reluctant to expose their son to the temptations of a noble house — young Fichte was consigned to the care of his new protector, who engaged to treat him as his own child.

His first removal was to Siebeneichen, a seat on the Elbe, belonging to the Freiherr. The gloomy solemnity of this place and its surrounding forests pressed heavily upon the inexperienced boy: he was seized with a deep melancholy, which threatened to injure his health. His kind foster-father prudently resolved to place him under the care of a clergyman in the neighboring village of Niederau, who, himself without family, had a great love for children. Here Fichte spent the happiest years of his boyhood. He received the kindest attentions from his teacher, whose name he never mentioned in after years without the deepest and most grateful emotion. Here the foundation of his education was laid in a knowledge of the ancient languages; and so rapid was his progress, that his instructor soon found his own learning insufficient for the further superintendence of his pupil's studies. In his twelfth year he was sent by the Freiherr von Miltitz first to the town school of Meissen, and soon afterwards to the public school of Pforta, near Raumburg.

The school at Pforta retained many traces of its monkish origin: the teachers and pupils lived in cells, and the boys were allowed to leave the interior only once a week, and that under inspection, to visit a par-

ticular play-ground in the neighborhood. The stiffest formality pervaded the economy of this establishment, and every indication of freewill was carefully suppressed. The living spirit of knowledge was unrecognised in its antiquated routine, and the generous desire of excellence was excluded by the petty artifices of jealousy. Instead of the free communication, kind advice, and personal example of a home, secrecy, distrust, and deceit were the prevalent characteristics of the school.

When he was scarcely thirteen years of age, Fichte entered this seminary ; and from this time forth he was alone in the world, trusting to his own strength and guidance. So soon was he called upon to exercise that powerful and clear-sighted independence for which he was afterwards so much distinguished.

The strange world which he now entered, the gloom and confinement which he encountered, made a deep impression on his mind. His sadness and tears exposed him to the mockery of his school-fellows ;—he wanted prudence to disregard them, and courage to complain to a teacher. He determined to run away. Shame and the fear of being sent back to Pforta would prevent him from returning to his protector, the Freiherr ; he therefore conceived the idea of seeking some distant island, where, like Robinson, he might lead a life of perfect freedom. But he would not steal away — he would make it evident that necessity drove him to the course he took. He warned his senior, who oppressed him severely, that he would no longer suffer such treatment, and that if it were not amended he

should leave the school. His threat was of course received with laughter and contempt, and the boy now thought he might quit the place with honor. The opportunity was soon found, and he took the way to Raumburg. On the road he remembered the maxim of his old friend, the pastor, that every undertaking should be begun with a prayer for divine aid. He sunk to his knees on a rising ground. During prayer he called to mind his parents, their care for him, the grief which his sudden disappearance would cause them. "Never to see them again!" — this thought was too much for him: his joy and his courage were already gone. He determined to return, and confess his fault. On his way back he met those who had been sent after him. When taken before the Rector, he admitted that it had been his intention to run away, but at the same time recounted so ingenuously the motives which had induced him to take this step, that the Rector not only forgave his fault, but resolved to take him under his special protection. He obtained another senior, who soon gained his affections, and was afterwards his companion and friend at the University.

From this time, Fichte's residence at Pforta became gradually more agreeable to him. He entered zealously upon his studies, and found in them occupation, interest, and spiritual nourishment. The defects of his previous education were supplied by industry, and he soon found himself comfortable and happy. Among those older scholars with whom Fichte now associated, a spirit of independence sprang up — they labored assiduously to set themselves free from the influence of

their teachers, particularly of those who held the most antiquated and worn-out notions. The praise or blame of these masters was little valued among them, if they could secure the esteem of each other. Books imbued with the new spirit of free inquiry were secretly obtained, and in spite of the strictest prohibitions, great part of the night was spent in their perusal. The works of Wieland, Lessing, and Goethe were positively forbidden, yet they found their way within the walls, and were eagerly studied. Lessing's controversy with Göze made a deep impression upon Fichte: each successive number of the *Anti-Göze* he almost committed to memory. A demand for unfettered inquiry was awakened within him: he understood for the first time the meaning of scientific knowledge, and with this knowledge he acquired a presentiment of a new spiritual life. Lessing became to him an object of such reverence, that he determined to devote his first days of freedom to seek a personal interview with his mental liberator. But this plan was frustrated by want of money; and when afterwards it might have been carried into execution, an untimely death had deprived Germany of her boldest thinker.

In 1780, Fichte, then eighteen years of age, entered the University of Jena. He joined the theological faculty, not so much, probably, by his own choice, as by desire of his parents and protector. By his interest in other branches of science, and by the marked direction of his mind to clearness and certainty in his knowledge, it soon became evident that he would not accept

the shortest and easiest way to the completion of his studies. Nothing definite is known of the early progress of his mind, but his later productions leave no doubt of its general tendency. He must soon have been struck with the disparity between the form of theology as it was then taught, and the wants of a philosophic intellect. Fichte could only be satisfied with a consistent theory, carried out from one fundamental principle through all its ramifications. We may conjecture what doubts and obscurities dogmatic theology must have presented to his mind at this time, when we recollect that, even at an after period of his life, he still interested himself in the task of reconciling faith with knowledge — revelation with science. He attended a course of Dogmatics by C. F. Pezold, at Leipzic, to which place he had removed from Jena; and in the attempt to attain a clear comprehension of the theological doctrines of the attributes of God, the creation, the freedom of the will, &c., he encountered unexpected difficulties, which led him into a wider circle of inquiry, and finally drove him to abandon the theological for the philosophical point of view. Thus his philosophical speculations had their origin in an attempt to create a tenable system of dogmatics, and to obtain light on the higher questions of theology.

Some hints of the early direction of his philosophical studies may be gathered from his letters written about this time. The question which chiefly engaged his attention seems to have been that of Liberty and Necessity. Rejecting the doctrine of free-will considered as *absolute indifferent self-determination*, he adopted

the view, which, to distinguish it from *fatalism*, may be named *determinism*. Every complete and consistent philosophy contains a deterministic side, for the thought of an all-directing Unity is the beginning and end of profound investigation. *Fatalism* sees in this highest unity a dark and mysterious Nemesis — an unconscious mechanical necessity ; *determinism*, the highest disposing reason, the infinite Spirit and God, to whom the determination of each living being is not only to be referred, but in whom alone it becomes clear and intelligible.

Fichte seems to have adopted this view apart from any foreign iufluence ; — for he was as yet unacquainted with Spinoza, its most consistent expounder, whom he had only heard mentioned as an abstruse atheist. He communicated his opinions to a Saxon preacher, who had the reputation of distinguished philosophical attainments, and was well versed in the Wolffian metaphysics. He was informed that he had adopted Spinozism, and it was through Wolff's refutation that he first became acquinted with that profound and systematic thinker. The study of Spinoza's Ethics made a powerful impression upon him, and confirmed him in the opinions he had adopted. But in after years, prolonged investigation left him dissatisfied with these views ; — the indestructible feeling of internal independence and freedom, rendered doubly powerful by the energy of his own character, could neither be removed, nor explained on an *exclusively* deterministic theory, which must ultimately have come into collision with his strongest mental bias — to look upon freedom — self-deter-

mination — as the only true and real being. This is the ground-principle of the Wissenchaftslehre, which in this respect stands opposed to the doctrine of Spinoza, although a general harmony does notwithstanding reign throughout the details of these two great modern systems of spiritualism. Thus has every great theory its foundation in the individual character, and is indeed only the scientific expression of the spiritual life of its originator.

Amid these lofty speculations, poverty, the scholar's bride, knocked at his door, and roused him to that struggle with the world, in which so many purchase ease with degradation, but in which men such as he find strength and confidence and triumph. His generous benefactor was now dead, and he was thrown on his own resources. From 1784 to 1788 he earned a precarious livelihood by acting as tutor in various houses in Saxony. His studies were desultory and interrupted; he had not even the means of procuring books; the strength which should have been devoted to his own mental cultivation, was wasted in obtaining a scanty subsistence. But amid all his privations his courage never deserted him, nor the inflexible determination, which was not so much an act of his will as a law of his nature, — to pursue truth for her own sake and at all hazards. "It is our business," says he on another occasion, "it is our business to be true to ourselves: the consequence is altogether in the hands of providence." His favorite plan of life at this period, and for a long time afterwards, was to become a village pastor in Saxony, and amid the leisure which he should

find in that occupation, to prosecute, without disturbance, his own mental culture. But his theological studies were not completed, and he was without the means of continuing them. In 1787 he addressed a letter to the President of the Consistory, requesting to be allowed a share of the support which many poor students enjoy at the Saxon Universities, until the following Easter, when he should be ready to present himself before the Consistory for examination. "I have never," he says, "partaken in the public provision for students, nor have I enjoyed an allowance of any kind, although my poverty can be clearly proved. Is it not possible then, to allow me a maintenance sufficient for this short time, that I may be enabled to devote myself to theology until Easter! . . . . . Without this, my residence at Leipzic is of no avail to me, for I am compelled to give all my time to heterogeneous pursuits, in order that I may even live. . . . . Should it please you to grant my request, I assure you by all that I hold sacred, that I will devote myself entirely to this object, that I will consecrate my life to the Fatherland which supported me at school, and which since then has only become dearer to me, and that I will come before the High Consistory, prepared for my examination, and submit my future destiny to its wisdom." No notice was taken of his request — partly, it may be conjectured, on account of doubts which were entertained of his orthodoxy — a reason which closed the gates of preferment against his friend Weisshuhn and many others.

In May, 1788, every prospect had closed around

him, and every honorable means of advancement seemed to be exhausted. The present was utterly barren, and there was no hope in the future. It is needful that natures like his should be nurtured in adversity, that they may discover their own strength; prosperity might lull into an inglorious slumber the energies for whose appearance the world is waiting. He would not disclose his helpless situation to any of his well-wishers, but the proud consciousness of his own worth enabled him, amid unmerited sufferings, to oppose the bold front of human dignity against the pressure of opposing circumstances.

It was the eve of his birthday. With unavailing anxiety he again pondered all his projects, and found all alike hopeless. The world had cast him out, — his country refused him food, — he thought his last birthday was at hand; but he was determined that his honor — all that he could now call his own, should remain unsullied. Full of bitter thoughts, he returned to his solitary lodging. He found a letter awaiting him; it was from his friend the tax-collector Weisse, requesting him to come immediately to his house. He there placed in Fichte's hands an offer of a tutorship in a private family in Zurich. The sudden revulsion of feeling in the young man could not be concealed, and led to an explanation of his circumstances. The offer was at once accepted, and aided by his kind friend in the necessary arrangements, he set out for Switzerland in August, 1788. His scanty means compelled him to travel on foot, but his heart was light, and the fresh hopes of youth shone brightly on his path. Dis-

appointment, privation, and bondage, had been his close companions, but these were now left behind him, and he was to find an asylum in Liberty's own mountain-home — the land which Tell had consecrated to all future ages as the sacred abode of Truth and Freedom.

He arrived at Zurich on the 1st of September, and immediately entered upon his office. His duties occupied him the greater part of the day, but he also engaged in some minor literary pursuits. His philosophical studies were in the meantime laid aside. At the request of a friend who had sketched out the plan of a scriptural epos, he wrote an essay on this form of poetry, with special reference to Klopstock's Messias. He also translated some of the odes of Horace, and the whole of Sallust, with an introduction on the style and character of this author. He preached occasionally in Zurich, at Flaach, and at several other places in the neighborhood, with distinguished success. He likewise drew out a plan for the establishment of a School of Oratory in Zurich, which, however, was never realized.

In the circle of his friends at Zurich were Lavater, Steinbruchel, Hottinger, and particularly the Canons Tobler and Pfennigar. In his letters he speaks also of Achelis, a candidate of theology from Bremen, and Escher, a young poet, as his intimate friends: — the latter died soon after Fichte's departure from Switzerland.

But of all the friendships which he formed here, the most important in its influence upon his future life was

that of Rahn, whose house was in a manner the centre of the society of Zurich. Rahn was brother-in-law to Klopstock, with whom he had formed a strong friendship during Klopstock's visit to Switzerland in 1750, and with whose eldest sister Johanna he was afterwards united. From this marriage with Klopstock's sister, sprang, besides other children, their eldest daughter Johanna Maria, who became Fichte's wife. Her mother dying while she was yet young, she devoted herself entirely to her father, and to his comfort sacrificed worldly show and many proffered alliances. The foundation of her character was deep religious feeling, and an unusual strength and faithfulness of affection. As her family occupied a much higher station in point of worldly importance than any to which Fichte could reasonably aspire, her engagement with him was the result of disinterested attachment alone. Fichte's love was worthy of the noble-minded woman who had called it forth. It was the devotion of his whole nature — enthusiastic like his love for his country, dignified like his love of knowledge, but softened by the deepest tenderness of an earnest and passionate soul. But on this subject he must speak for himself. The following are extracts from letters addressed to Johanna Rahn, while he resided at Zurich, or during short occasional absences. It is necessary to premise that the termination of his engagement, at Easter, 1790, led to the departure from Zurich which is alluded to in some of these passages. Fichte, tired of the occupation of a a tutor, was desirous of obtaining a situation of a higher

nature, and Rahn, through his connections in Denmark, endeavored to promote his views.

"I hasten to answer your questions — 'Whether my friendship for you has not arisen from the want of other female society?' I think I can answer this question decidedly. I have been acquainted with many women, and held many different relations with them. I believe I have experienced, if not all the different *degrees*, yet all the different *kinds*, of feeling towards your sex, but I have never felt towards any as I feel towards you. No one else has called forth this perfect confidence, without the remotest suspicion of any dissimulation on your part, or the least desire to conceal anything from you on mine, — this wish to be wholly known to you even as I am, — this attachment, in which difference of sex has not the remotest *perceptible* influence (for farther can no mortal know his own heart), — this true esteem for your spiritual nature, and acquiescence in whatever you resolve upon. Judge, then, whether it is for want of other female society that you have made an impression upon me which no one else has done, and taught me a new mode of feeling. 'Whether I will forget you when distant?' Does man forget a new mode of being and its cause?" . . . . .

"The warm sympathy which appears in all these inquiries, the delightful kindness you have shown me on all occasions, the rapture which I feel when I know that I am not indifferent to such a person,— these, dearest, deserve that I should say nothing to you which is profaned by flattery, and that he whom you consider worthy

of your friendship should not debase himself by a false modesty. Your own fair, open soul deserves that I should never seem to doubt its pure expression, and hence I promise, on my side too, perfect openness."

* * * * * *

"'Whether there can be love without esteem?' Oh yes,— thou dear, pure one! Love is of many kinds. Rousseau proves that by his reasoning, and still better by his example. 'La pauvre Maman' and 'Madame N———' love in very different fashions. But I believe there are many kinds of love which do not appear in Rousseau's life. You are very right in saying that no *true* and *enduring* love can exist without cordial esteem; that every other draws regret after it, and is unworthy of any noble human soul.

"One word about pietism. Pietists place religion mostly in externals; in acts of worship performed mechanically, without aim, as bond-service to God; in orthodoxy of opinion, &c. &c.; and they have this among other characteristic marks, that they give themselves more solicitude about others' piety than their own. It is not right to hate these men,— we should hate no one, — but to me they are very contemptible, for their character implies the most deplorable emptiness of the head, and the most sorrowful perversion of the heart. Such my dear friend can never be; she cannot become such, even were it possible — which it is not — that her character were perverted; she can *never* become such, her nature has too much reality in it. Your trust in Providence, your anticipations of a future life, are wise and Christian. I hope, if I may venture to speak of my-

self, that no one will take me to be a pietist or stiff formalist, but I know no feelings more thoroughly interwoven with my soul than these are."

* * * * * *

"I am once more within these walls, which are only dear to me because they enclose you; and when again left to myself, to my solitude, to my own thoughts, my soul flies directly to your presence. How is this? It is but three days since I have seen you, and I must often be absent from you for a longer period than that. Distance is but distance, and I am equally separated from you in Flaach or in Zurich — But how comes it that this absence has seemed to me longer than usual, that my heart longs more earnestly to be with you, that I imagine I have not seen you for a week? Have I philosophized falsely of late about distance? Oh that our feelings must still contradict the firmest conclusions of our reason!" . . . . . "You know doubtless that my peace has been broken by intelligence of the death of a man whom I prized and loved, whose esteem was one of the sweetest enjoyments which Zurich has afforded me, and whose friendship I would still seek to deserve; and you would weep with me if you knew how dear this man was to me."

* * * * * *

"Your offer of Friday has touched me deeply; it has convinced me yet more strongly, if that were possible, of your worth. Not because you are willing, for my sake, to deprive yourself of something which may be to you a trifle, as you say it is — a thousand others could do that — but that, although you must have re-

marked something of my way of thinking ('pride' the world calls it), you should yet have made that offer so naturally and openly, as if your whole heart had told you that I *could* not misunderstand you; that although I had never accepted aught from any man on earth, yet that I would accept it from you; that we were too closely united to have different opinions about such things as these. Dearest, you have given me a proof of your confidence, your kindness, your — (dare I write it?) — love, than which there could be no greater. Were I not now wholly yours I should be a monster, without head or heart — without any title to happiness.

"But in order to show myself to you in a just light, you have here my true thoughts and feelings upon this matter, as I read them myself in my own breast.

"At first — I confess it with deep shame — at first it roused my pride. Fool that I was, I thought for a moment — not longer, that you had misunderstood what I wrote to you lately. Yet even in this moment I was more grieved than hurt: the blow came from your hand. Instantly, however, my better nature awoke; I felt the whole worth of your heart, and I was deeply moved. Had not your father come at this moment, I could not have mastered my emotions: only shame for having for a moment undervalued you and myself kept them within bounds.

"Yet I cannot accept it: — not that your gift would disgrace me, or *could* disgrace me. A gift out of mere compassion for my poverty I could abhor, and even hate the giver: — this is perhaps the most neglected part of my character. But the gift of friendship, of a friend-

ship which, like yours, rests upon cordial esteem, cannot proceed from compassion, and is an honor instead of a dishonor. But, *in truth*, I need it not. I have indeed no money by me at present, but I have no unusual disbursements to make, and I shall have enough to meet my very small regular expenses till my departure. I seldom come into difficulties when I have no money, — I believe Providence watches over me. I have examples of this which I might term singular, did I not recognize in them the hand of Providence, which condescends even to our meanest wants.

" Upon the whole, gold appears to me a very insignificant commodity. I believe that a man with any intellect may always provide for his wants ; and for more than this, gold is useless ; — hence I have always despised it. Unhappily it is here bound up with a part of the respect which our fellow-men entertain for us, and this has never been a matter of indifference to me. Perhaps I may by and by free myself from this wickedness also : it does not contribute to our peace.

" On account of this contempt of money, I have for four years never accepted a farthing from my parents, because I have seven sisters, who are all young and in part uneducated, and because I have a father who, were I to allow it, would in his kindness bestow upon me that which is the right of his other children. I have not accepted even presents from them upon any pretence ; and since then, I have maintained myself very well, and stand more *àmon aise* than before towards my parents, and particularly towards my too kind father.

" However, I promise you — (how happy do I feel,

dear, noble friend, to be permitted to speak thus with you) — I promise you, that if I should fall into any pecuniary embarrassments (as there is no likelihood that I shall, with my present mode of thinking and my attendant fortune), you shall be the first person to whom I shall apply — to whom I shall have applied since the time I declined assistance from my parents. It is worthy of your kind heart to receive this promise, and it is not unworthy of me to give it."

* * * * * *

"Could anything indemnify me for the loss of some hours of your society, I should be indemnified. I have received the most touching proofs of the attachment of the good old widow, whom I have only seen for the third time, and of her gratitude for a few courtesies which were to me nothing — absolutely nothing, had they not cost me two days' absence from you. She wept when I took my leave, though I had allowed her to expect that she should see me again before my departure. I desire to lay aside all vanities; — with some, the desire for literary fame, &c., I have in a certain degree succeeded; but the desire to be beloved — beloved by simple true hearts — is no vanity, and I will not lay it aside. . . . . .

"What a wholly new, joyful, bright existence I have had since I became sure of being yours! how happy I am that so noble a soul bestows its sympathy upon me, and such sympathy! — this I can never express. Would that I could, that I might be able to thank you! . . . .

"My departure, dearest, draws near, and you have discovered the secret of making the day which formerly

seemed to me a day of deliverance, the bitterest in my life. I shall not tell you whether the day is settled or not. If you do not absolutely command it, you shall not know of it. Leave-taking is bitter, very bitter, and even its announcement has always something painful in it. But one of us — and I shall be that one — must bear the consciousness that thenceforth (but only for a time, if God does not require the life of one of us) we see each other no more. Unless you absolutely require it, you shall not know when I am with you for the last time."

* * * * * *

"I know the business of the scholar; I have no new discoveries to make about it. I have very little fitness for being a scholar *à métier;* I must not only *think*, I must *act:* least of all can I think about trifles; and hence it is not exactly my business to become a Swiss professor — that is, a schoolman. . . . . Now I think that the way which you propose cannot have the effect you expect from it. My essays cannot create what is called a 'sensation;' this is not in them nor in me. Many would not even understand their contents; those who did understand them, would, I believe, consider me as a useful man, but *comme il y en a beaucoup.* It is quite another thing when one takes an interest in the author, and knows him.

"If you should be able to excite such an interest among your relatives, then indeed something more might be expected. But the matter does not seem pressing. Before all things there must be a professorship vacant at Bern, and indeed such a one as I could undertake.

Then it would be difficult, during my stay here, to make a copy of my essays. And perhaps I shall write something better afterwards, or perhaps I shall hit upon some arrangement in Leipzic respecting these essays, which can easily be made known in Bern. At all events, you shall know, and every good man who takes any interest in me shall always know where I am. At the same time I entreat of you,— although I know your good will towards me does not need the request,— both now and after my departure, to omit no opportunity which presents itself of doing me any service, and to inform me of it. I believe in a Providence, and I watch its signs."

* * * * * *

"So you desire this bitter leave-taking? Be it so, but under one condition: I must bid you farewell *alone*. In the presence of any other, even of your excellent father, I should suffer from the reserve of which I complain so much. I depart, since it must be told, to-morrow eight-days. This day week I see you for the last time, for I set out very early on Sunday. Try to arrange that I may see you alone: how it is to be arranged I know not, but I would far rather take no leave of you at all, than take a cold formal one.

"I thank you heartily for your noble letter of yesterday, particularly because your narrative confirms me so strongly in a much cherished principle. God cares for us — He will forsake no honorable man."

* * * * * *

"And so be convinced that nothing can turn my thoughts from you. The reasons you have long known.

You know my heart; you know yourself; you know that I know you: can you then doubt that I have found the only female soul which I can value, honor, and love? — that I have nothing more to seek from the sex, — that I can find nothing more that *is mine?*"

Towards the close of March, 1790, Fichte left Zurich on his return to his native land, with some letters of recommendation to the Courts of Wirtemberg and Weimar. He was once more thrown upon the world; — his outward prospects as uncertain as when he entered Switzerland two years before. Poverty again compelled him to travel for the most part on foot, but, as before, the toil of his journey was lightened by a high sense of honor, an inflexible courage, an unwavering faith; and to these was now added a sweeter guide — a star of milder radiance, which threw a soft but steady light upon the wanderer's way, and pointed him to a happy though distant place of rest. His love was no fleeting passion, no maudlin sensibility, but united itself with his philosophy and his religion in one ever-flowing fountain of spiritual power. The world might turn coldly away from him, for it knew him not; but he did not stoop to its meanness, because he did not seek its rewards. He had one object before him — the development of his own nature; and there was one who knew him, whose thoughts were with him from afar, whose sympathies were all his own. His labors might be arduous, but they could not now be in vain, for although the destiny of his being did not as yet lie before him in perfect theoretical clearness, yet his integrity of purpose

and purity of feeling unconsciously preserved him from error, while the energy of his will bore him upward and onward over the petty obstructions of life.

He arrived at Stuttgard in the beginning of April, but not finding his recommendations to the Wirtemberg Court of much advantage, he left it after a short stay. On his way to Saxony he visited Weimar. He did not see Herder, who was ill, nor Goethe, who was absent on his Italian tour, nor Schiller, who was at this time commencing his labors as Professor of History at Jena. He returned to Leipzic about the middle of May, his small stock of money exhausted by the expenses of his journey; and was kindly received by his friend Weisse, through whose recommendation he had obtained the appointment at Zurich. Discovering no prospect of obtaining any preceptorship of a superior kind, he engaged in literary occupations in order to procure a livelihood. He conceived the plan of a monthly literary journal, the principal objects of which should be to expose the dangerous tendencies of the prevalent literature of the day, to show the mutual influence of correct taste and pure morality, and to direct its readers to the best authors, both of past and present times. But such an undertaking was too much opposed to the interests of the booksellers to find favor in their eyes. "I have," hé says, "spoken to well-disposed people on this matter, to Weisse and Palmer; they all admit that it is a good and useful idea, and indeed a want of the age, but they all tell me that I shall find no publisher. I have therefore, out of sorrow, communicated my plan to no bookseller, and I must now write — not pernicious

writings — *that* I will never do, but something that is neither good nor bad, in order to earn a little money. I am now engaged on a tragedy, a business which of all possible occupations least belongs to me, and of which I shall certainly make nothing ; and upon novels, small romantic stories — a kind of reading which is good for nothing but to kill time ; this, however, it seems, is what the booksellers will take and pay for."

So far as his outward existence was concerned, this residence at Leipzic was a period of great uncertainty and trouble. He could obtain no settled occupation, but was driven from one expedient to another to procure the means of subsistence. At one time he gives "a lesson in Greek to a young man between 11 and 12 o'clock," and spends the rest of the day in study and starvation. His tragedy and novel writing would not last long, nor be very tolerable while it did last. In August he writes —"Bernstorff must have received my letter and essay ; I gave it into Herr Bohn's own hands, and he promised to take care of it ; yet I have no answer. A lady at Weimar had a plan to obtain for me a good situation ; it must have failed, for I have not heard from her for two months. Of other prospects which I thought almost certain, I shall be silent. As for authorship, I have been able to do little or nothing, for I am so distracted and tossed about by constant schemes and undertakings, that I have had few quiet days. . . . . In short, Providence either has something else in store for me, and hence will give me nothing to do here, as indeed has been the case ; or intends by these troubles to exercise and invigorate me still further. I have lost almost everything,

except my courage." Again we hear of a distant prospect of going to Vienna to prosecute his literary schemes, and thus of being nearer Zurich — nay, when on his way, of even visiting it. And then again — "This week seems to be a critical time with me ; — all my prospects, even the last, have vanished." But his strength did not fail him ; alone and unfriended, he shrank not from the bitter trial. Adversity might roll her billows over his head, but her rage was spent in vain against a soul which she could bend to no unworthy deed.

And yet he was not alone. A fair and gentle spirit was ever by his side, whispering to him of peace, and happiness, and love. "In the twilight," he says, "before I light my lamp, I dream myself back to thee, sit by thy side, chat with thee, and ask whether I am still dear to thee ; — ask indeed, but not from doubt — I know before-hand that thou wilt answer, yes. I am always with thee on Saturdays. I cannot give up those Saturday meetings. I think I am still in Zurich, take my hat and stick and will come to thee ; and then I remember, and fret at fortune, and laugh at myself." Amid the desolation of his outward prospects, the current of his affections seems to have flowed only more strongly and fully. In them he found a refuge from unworthy thoughts, a strong support in the conflict with misery and want. As the Alpine plant strikes its roots more firmly in barren and rocky places, so did his love cling more closely round his soul, when every other joy had died and withered there.

> "The wretched are the faithful : 'tis their fate
> To have all feeling, save the one, decay,
> And every passion into one dilate."

"Thou dear angel-soul," he writes, "do thou help me, do thou keep me from falling! And so thou dost. What sorrow can grieve, what distress can discourage me, so long as I possess the firm assurance that I have the sympathy of the best and noblest of women, that she looks upon her destiny as inseparably bound up in mine; that our hearts are one? Providence has given me thy heart, and I want nothing more. Mine is thine for ever."

Of a project for engaging him in the ministry, he thus writes—"I know my opinions. I am neither of the Lutheran nor Reformed Church, but of the Christian; and were I compelled to choose, I should (since no purely *Christian* community now exists) attach myself to that community in which there is most freedom of thought and charity of life; and that is not the Lutheran, I think. . . . . I have given up these hopes in my fatherland entirely. There is indeed a degree of enlightenment and rational religious knowledge existing among the younger clergy of the present day, which is not to be found to the same extent in any other country of Europe. But this is crushed by a worse than Spanish inquisition, under which they must cringe and dissemble, partly because they are deficient in ability, partly because in consequence of the number of clergy in our land their services can be spared, while *they* cannot cannot sacrifice their employment. Hence arises a slavish, crouching, hypocritical spirit. A revolution is indeed impending: but when? and how? In short, I will be no preacher in Saxony."

The only record of his religious opinions at this time

which is preserved, is a remarkable fragment, entitled "Aphorisms on Religion and Deism." The object of this essay was to set at rest the much-vexed questions between Philosophy and Christianity, by strictly defining the respective provinces of each; by distinguishing between the objective reality which reason demands of philosophy, and the incarnate form of truth which religion offers to the feelings and sympathies of men. In the adaptation of Christianity to the wants of the sinner, in its appeal to the heart rather than to the understanding, he finds the explanation of its nature and purposes: "Those who are whole need not the physician, but those who are sick." "I am come not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." This fragment, by its distinct recognition of the radical difference between feeling and knowledge, and the consequent vanity of any attempt to decide between the different aspects which the great questions of human destiny assume before the cognitive and sensitive faculties, may be looked upon as the stepping-stone to that important revolution in Fichte's mental world, to which the attention of the reader must now be directed.

The Critical or Kantean Philosophy was at this time the great topic of discussion in the higher circles of Germany. Virulently assailed by the defenders of the existing systems, with Herder at their head, it was as eagerly supported by a crowd of followers, who looked upon Kant with an almost fanatical veneration. Fichte's attention was turned to it quite accidentally. Some increased success in teaching, during the winter

of 1790, rendered his outward circumstances more comfortable than before, and left his mind more at liberty to engage in serious study. He plunged with enthusiasm into the new philosophy.

The system of religious necessarianism before alluded to, which frequently shows itself in his letters, was by no means in harmony with the natural bent of his character. His energy of will and restless spirit of enterprise assorted ill with a theory in which he was compelled to regard himself as a passive instrument in the hands of a higher power. This inconsistency must have often suggested itself to him before he met with its remedy; he must have frequently felt, that the theory which satisfied his understanding stood in opposition to his feelings. He could not be contented with any superficial or partial reconcilement of this opposition. But he was now introduced to a system in which his difficulties disappeared; in which, by a rigid examination of the cognitive faculty, the boundaries of human knowledge were accurately defined, and within those boundaries its legitimacy successfully vindicated against skepticism on the one hand, and blind credulity on the other; in which the facts of man's moral nature furnished an indestructible foundation for a system of ethics where duty was neither resolved into self-interest, nor degraded into the slavery of superstition, but recognised by free-will as the absolute law of its being, in the strength of which it was to front the necessity of nature, break down every obstruction that barred its way, and rise at last, unaided, to the sublime consciousness of an independent, and therefore eternal, existence.

Such a theory was well calculated to rouse Fichte's enthusiasm, and engage all his powers. The light which he had been unconsciously seeking now burst upon his sight, — every doubt vanished before it, and the purpose of his being lay clear and distinct before him. The world, and man's life in it, acquired a new significance, every faculty a clearer vision, every power a fresher energy. But he must speak for himself: —

To Achelis at Bremen.

" The last four or five months which I have passed in Leipzic have been the happiest period of my life; and what is most satisfactory about it is, that I have to thank no man for the smallest ingredient in its pleasures. You know that before leaving Zurich I became somewhat sickly: either it was partly imagination, or the cookery did not agree with me. Since my departure from Zurich I have been health itself, and I know how to prize this blessing. The circumstances of my stay in Zurich, and still more of my travels, had strained my fancy to an unnatural height. When I came to Leipzic, my brain swarmed with great plans. All were wrecked; and of so many soap-bubbles there now remains not even the light froth which composed them. This disturbed my peace of mind a little, and it was half in despair that I joined a party to which I should long ere now have belonged. Since I could not alter my outward circumstances, I resolved upon internal change. I threw myself into philosophy, and, as you know, into the Kantean. Here I found the remedy for my evils, and joy enough to boot. The

influence of this philosophy, and particularly the moral part of it (which, however, is unintelligible without previous study of the Critique of Pure Reason), upon the whole spiritual life, and particularly the revolution which it has caused in my own mode of thought, is indescribable. To you, especially, I owe the acknowledgment, that I now heartily believe in the freedom of man, and am well convinced that it is only on this supposition that duty, virtue, or morality of any kind, is so much as possible ; — a truth which indeed I saw before, and perhaps acquired from you. Further, it is very evident to me, that many pernicious consequences to society flow from the commonly-received principle of the necessity of all human actions ; that it is the source of a great part of the immorality of the so-called higher classes ; and that if any one, accepting this principle, yet preserves himself pure from such corruption, it is not on account of the innocence, or even the utility of the principle itself. Your uncorrupted moral feelings guided you more truly than did my arguments, and you must admit that, in the latter respect, error is pardonable. A multitude of others, who do not err, have to thank, not their greater acuteness, but their inconsequential reasoning. I am also firmly convinced that this is no land of enjoyment here below, but a land of labor and toil, and that every joy should be nothing more than a refreshment and an incentive to greater exertion ; that the ordering of our fortune is not demanded of us, but only the cultivation of ourselves Hence I do not trouble myself about outward things, — endeavor not to *seem*, but to *be* ;

and it is to these convictions that I am indebted for the deep tranquillity of soul which I enjoy. My external circumstances suit well with these dispositions. I am master of no one, and no one's servant. I have no further prospects: the present constitution of the church, and indeed the men who compose it, do not please me. So long as I can maintain my present independence, I shall do so at all hazards.

"You ask whether I contribute to the journals? No, to none of them. It was my intention, at first, to write for the "Bibliothek der Schönen Wissenschaften." But all is anarchy there. Weisse *is called* the editor, but the bookseller *is* the editor; and I will have nothing to do with a bookseller in matters of this kind. I sent my essay upon Klopstock's Messias to B. for the "Deutsche Museum." He replied, that he feared that the poet, who had for some time honored him with his friendship, would take it ill if he should publish an essay which might put his Messias in danger, &c., &c. I was satisfied with his answer, for I had already repented of the sin. If ever I become an author, it shall be on my own account. Moreover, authorship as a trade is not for me. It is incredible how much labor it costs me to accomplish something with which, after all, I am but half satisfied. The more I write, the more difficult does it become. I see that I want the living fire."

On the same subject, he writes to his school and college friend Weisshuhn: —

"I have lived in a new world since I have read the Critique of Practical Reason. Principles which I

believed were irrefragable, are refuted; things which I thought could never be proved,—as for example, the idea of absolute freedom, of duty, — are proved; and I am so much the happier. It is indescribable what respect for humanity, what power this system gives us! But why should I say this to you, who have known it longer than I have done? What a blessing to an age in which morality was torn up by the roots, and the name of duty obliterated from every vocabulary!"

And with still greater warmth he speaks of his new studies to Johanna Rahn: —

"My scheming spirit has now found rest, and I thank Providence that, shortly before all my hopes were frustrated, I was placed in a position which enabled me to bear the diappointment with cheerfulness. A circumstance, which seemed the result of mere chance, led me to give myself up entirely to the study of the Kantean philosophy — a philosophy that restrains the imagination, which was always too powerful with me, gives reason the sway, and raises the soul to an indescribable elevation above all earthly concerns. I have accepted a nobler morality, and instead of occupying myself with outward things, I employ myself more with my own being. This has given me a peace such as I have never before experienced: amid uncertain worldly prospects I have passed my happiest days. I shall devote some years of my life to this philosophy; and all that I write, at least for several years to come, shall be upon it. It is difficult beyond all conception, and stands much in need of simplification. . . . . The principles are indeed hard speculations which have

no direct bearing on human life, but their consequences are most important for an age whose morality is corrupted at the fountain-head; and to set these consequences before the world in a clear light, would, I believe, be doing it a good service. Say to thy dear father, whom I love as my own, that we erred in our inquiries into the necessity of human actions, for although we proceeded with accuracy, we set out from a false principle. I am now thoroughly convinced that the human will is free, and that to be happy is not the purpose of our being, — but to deserve happiness. I have to ask pardon of thee too, for having often led thee astray by such assertions. Achelis was right; without knowing it indeed; and why? Henceforth believe in thine own feelings; thou mayst not be able to confute opposing reasoners, yet they shall be confuted, and are so already, though they do not understand the confutation."

Inspired with this enthusiastic admiration for the Critical Philosophy, he resolved to become the exponent of its principles, and to rescue it from the obscurity which an uncouth terminology had thrown around it. This attempt had indeed been made already, and was still making, by a host of commentators, but the majority of these were either deficient in capacity, or, actuated by sordid motives, had eagerly seized the opportunity of gain which the prevalent excitement afforded, and crowded the literary market with crude and superficial productions. Fichte accordingly commenced an expository abridgment of Kant's Critique of the faculty of judgment. It was to be divided into two

parts, — the one devoted to the power of æsthetical, the other to that of teleological judgment. The first part was completed and sent to his friend Weisshuhn for correction, but the progress of the work was interrupted by events which caused him to leave Leipzic : it was never finished, and no part of it was published.

Interesting and remarkable too in this connection is the following passage from a letter written about this time to a literary friend : —

" If I am not deceived by the disposition of youth, which is more ready to hope than to fear, the golden age of our literature is at hand ; it will be enduring, and may perhaps surpass the most brilliant period in that of any other nation. The seed which Lessing sowed in his letters, and in his ' Dramaturgie,' now begins to bear fruit. His principles seem every day to be more extensively received and made the foundation of our literary judgments ; and Goethe's ' Iphigenie ' is the strongest proof of the possibility of their realization. And it seems to me, that he who in his twentieth year wrote the ' Robbers,' will, sooner or later, tread in the same path, and in his fortieth become our ' Sophocles.' "

And so it was ! — He who in his twentieth year wrote the " Robbers," did literally in his fortieth produce his " Wallenstein," followed in brilliant succession by " Mary Stuart," " The Maid of Orleans," — and, last and brightest of the train, by " William Tell," — a parting gift to the world from the " Sophocles " of Germany.

And now the time drew near which was at once to terminate his struggles with fortune, and realize the dearest wish of his heart. It had been arranged that Fichte should return to Zurich in 1791, to be united with her whom he most loved and honored upon earth. The noble-minded woman who was now to bind herself to him for ever, had resolved that henceforth he should pursue his literary undertakings, free from the cares of life. But Fichte looked forward to no period of inglorious repose; his ardent spirit had already formed a thousand plans of useful and honorable activity. "Not happiness, but labor," was his principle — a principle which ruled all his actions, in prosperity as well as in adversity. His letters to Johanna Rahn, in anticipation of this joyful event, breathe the same dignified tenderness which characterized their earlier correspondence: —

"And so, dearest, I solemnly devote myself to thee, —consecrate myself to be *thine*. I thank thee that thou hast thought me not unworthy to be thy companion on the journey of life. I have undertaken much: one day — God grant it be a distant one! — to take the place of thy noble father; to become the recompense of thy early wisdom, of thy child-like love, of thy steadfast virtue. The thought of the great duties which I take upon me, makes me feel how little I am. But the feeling of the greatness of these duties shall exalt me; and thy love, thy too favorable opinion of me, will lend to my imperfection all that I want. There is no land of happiness here below — I know it

now — but a land of toil, where every joy but strengthens us for greater labor. Hand in hand we shall traverse it, and encourage and strengthen each other, until our spirits — O may it be together! — shall rise to the eternal fountain of all peace. I stand now in fancy at the most important point of my earthly existence, which divides it into two different, very different, portions, — and marvel at the unseen hand which has led me through the first, dangerous part, through the land of perplexity and doubt! How long had I despaired of such a companion as thou, in whom manly dignity and female tenderness are united! What if I had contented myself with some decorated puppet of thy sex? — that Being who rules all things was kinder to me than, in the feeling of my unworthiness, I had dared to wish or hope;—I was led to thee. That Being will do yet more for me. We shall one day, O dearest, stand again at the partition-wall which shall divide our *whole* life into two parts — into an earthly and a spiritual; — and then shall we look upon the latter part of the earthly which we shall have traversed together, as we do now upon its first part; and surely we shall then too marvel at the same wisdom which now calls forth our wonder, but with loftier feelings and with clearer insight. I love to place myself in that position. . . . .

"The surest means of acquiring a conviction of a life after death, is so to act in this life that we can venture to wish for another. He who feels that if there is a God he must look down graciously upon him, will not be disturbed by arguments *against* his being, and he needs none *for* it. He who has sacrificed so much

for virtue that he looks for recompense in a future life, needs no proof of the reality of such a life ; — he does not *believe* in it — he *feels* it. And so, thou dear companion for this short life and for eternity, we shall strengthen each other in this conviction, not by arguments but by deeds."

" LEIPZIC, 1*st March*, 1791.

" At the end of this month I shall be free, and have determined to come to thee. I see nothing that can prevent me. I indeed still await the sanction of my parents ; but I have been for a long time so well assured of their love — almost, if I may venture to say it, of their deference to my opinion, that I need not anticipate any obstacle on their part.

* * * * *

And now dearest, I turn to thee, passing over all things unconnected with thee, which therefore do not interest me. Is it true, or is it but a sweet dream, that I am so near to the one best joy of my life, — the possession of the noblest of souls, chosen and destined for me by the Creator from among all other souls ? — that my happiness, my peace, shall be the objeet of your wishes, your cares, your prayers ? Could my feelings but flow to thee, warm as at this moment they are streaming through my breast, and threatening to burst it asunder !

" Accept me then, dearest maiden, with all my faults. How glad am I to think that I can give myself to one who can take me with these faults ; who has wisdom and strength enough to love me with them all, —

to help me to destroy them, so that I may one day appear with her, purified from all blemish, before Him who created us for each other! — Never have I been more sincerely penetrated by this feeling of my weakness, than since I received thy last letter, which reminds me of the poverty of all that I have said to thee; which reminds me of the vacillating state of mind in which I have written to thee. O what a *man* I have been! — People have sometimes attributed to me firmness of character, and I have been vain enough to accept their flattery as truth. To what accident am I indebted for this opinion, — I who have always allowed myself to be guided by circumstances, — whose soul has taken the colors of the events that surrounded me? With great pretensions, which I could never have maintained, I left Zurich. My hopes were all wrecked. Out of despair, more than from taste, I threw myself into the Kantean philosophy, and found a peace for which indeed I have to thank my good health and the free flight of my fancy; and even deceived myself so far as to believe that the sublime thoughts which I imprinted upon my *memory* were natives of my soul. Circumstances led me to another employment less satisfactory to the heart; and the change in my mode of life, — the winter, which never agrees with me, — an indisposition, and the troubles of a short journey, — these things could disturb the deeply-rooted peace of the philosopher, and bring me into a frightful humor! Shall I always be thus tossed to and fro like a wave? Take thou me, then, thou brave soul, and strengthen this indecision.

"Yet while I lament my inconstancy, how happy am I that I can pour out these complaints to a heart which knows me too well to misunderstand me! One of my feelings I can acquit of all fickleness: I can say it boldly, that I have never been untrue to thee, even in thought; and it is a touching proof of thy noble character, that amid all thy tender cares for me, thou hast never been anxious about this.

"The day of my departure is not exactly fixed, and I cannot determine it till I am about to set out. But it will be one of the first days of April. I shall write to thee of it, and I shall also write to thee on my journey."

And now all his brightest dreams were to be fulfilled; his cup was brimming with anticipated delight, the draught of joy was almost at his lips, when it was rudely dashed from his grasp. The day of his departure was already fixed, when the bankruptcy of a mercantile house to which Rahn had entrusted his property, threw the affairs of the latter into disorder, and even threatened to reduce him to indigence in his old age. Happily a part of his property was ultimately saved, but, in the meantime at least, all plans which were founded on his former prosperity were at an end. His misfortunes brought upon him a lingering sickness, by which he was brought to the brink of the grave. His life was preserved by the tender and unremitting cares of his daughter. In those dark years, when scarcely a ray of hope broke the gloom of present calamity, her conduct displayed that high-minded devotion which bears inevi-

table suffering without a murmur, and almost raises the passive above the active virtues of our nature.

As for Fichte, he had now become inured to disappointment. His courage soon returned to him, but he was filled with chagrin at having no power either to alleviate, or to share, the distresses of one dearer to him than life itself. The world with its difficulties and doubts was once more before him, and once more his indomitable spirit rose superior to them all. He obtained an appointment as tutor in the house of a Polish nobleman at Warsaw, and having announced his departure to Johanna Rahn in a letter in which he bids her be of good courage, and assures her earnestly of his own faithfulness, he once more assumed his pilgrim staff and turned his back upon Leipzic.

His diary written during this pedestrian journey to Poland evinces a clear and acute faculty of observation, and sketches very distinctly the peculiarities of the Saxon and Silesian character. One passage only, and that relative to a different subject, is here quoted : —

"*9th May.* — Arrived at Bichofswerda in good time ; drank tea at the inn, and sent my letter to Ram menau. Soon appeared my brother Gotthelf, the kind soul, whom I looked for the previous day at Pillnitz ; and immediately after him, Gottlob. My father had not been at home, but he came soon after — the good, honest, kind father ! His look, his tone, his reasoning — how much good they always do me ! Take away all my learning, O God, and make me such a good, true, faithful *man !* — how much would I gain by the exchange ! "

On the 7th of June he arrived at Warsaw, and immediately waited upon his employer, the Count Von P——. The Count was a good, easy man, perfectly submissive to the guidance of his wife, a vain, haughty, and whimsical woman. Fichte's pronunciation of the French language was found to be unsatisfactory, and his German bluntness of demeanor still more so. He discovered that this was no place for him, where the teacher was regarded as a hanger-on of the Countess, and no respect was paid to the dignity of his profession. He resigned his office without having entered upon its duties, and having with some difficulty obtained from the Countess by way of compensation, a sum sufficient for his maintenance for the succeeding two months, he resolved to visit Königsberg, instead of returning directly to his native country, in order that he might have an opportunity of cultivating a personal acquaintance with Kant, his great master in Philosophy. Having preached in the Evangelical Church at Warsaw before his departure, he left that city on the 25th of June for Königsberg.

Immediately on his arrival he visited Kant, but his first impressions of the Critical Philosopher do not seem to have been very favorable. His impetuous enthusiasm was chilled by a cold, formal reception, and he retired deeply disappointed. Unwilling, however, to abandon the purpose which had led him to Königsberg, he sought for some means of obtaining a more free and earnest interview, but for some time without success. At last he determined to write a "Kritik aller Offenbarung" (Critique of all Revelation), which

should serve as an introduction. He began on the 13th of July, and sent the finished work to Kant on the 18th of August. He went on the 23d to hear the opinion of the philosopher upon it, and was kindly received. He heard a very favorable judgment passed upon his book, but did not attain his principal object — the establishment of a scientific confidence. For the solution of his philosophical doubts he was referred to the Critique of Pure Reason, or to some of the philosopher's friends.

On revising his "Critique of all Revelation," he found that it did not thoroughly express his profoundest thoughts on the subject, and he therefore began to remodel and re-write it. But here again he was overtaken by want. Counting over his meagre store of money, he found that he had only sufficient for another fortnight. Alone and in a strange country, he knew not what to resolve upon. After having in vain endeavored to get some employment through the friends to whom he had been introduced by Kant, he determined to reveal to him the situation in which he was placed, and request his assistance to enable him to return to his own land. His letter to Kant on this subject is so strikingly characteristic of its writer, and describes so truly his position at the time, that it is here given at length.

To Kant.

"You will pardon me, sir, if on the present occasion I address you in writing rather than in speech.

"You have already favored me with kind recommendations which I had not ventured to ask from you,

— a generosity which infinitely increases my gratitude, and gives me courage to disclose myself entirely to you, which otherwise I could not have ventured to do without your direct permission, — a necessity which he who would not willingly reveal himself to every one, feels doubly towards a truly good character.

" In the first place, allow me to assure you, sir, that my resolution to proceed from Warsaw to Königsberg, instead of returning to Saxony, was indeed so far an interested resolution, that it gave me an opportunity of expressing my feelings towards the man to whom I owe all my convictions, principles, character, and even the very effort to possess such, — of profiting, so far as possible in a short time, by your society, and, if allowed, of recommending myself to your favorable notice in my after-life; — but I never could anticipate my present need of your kindness, partly because I considered Königsberg to be fertile in resources, — much more so, for example, than Leipzic, — and partly because I believed that, in the worst case, I should be able to find employment in Livonia, through a friend who occupies a creditable situation at Riga. I consider this assurance as due — partly to myself, that the feelings which flow purely from my heart may not incur the suspicion of mean selfishness — partly to you, because the free open gratitude of one, whom you have instructed and improved, cannot be indifferent to you.

" I have followed the profession of a private tutor for five years, and during this time have felt so keenly its disagreeable nature, — to be compelled to look upon imperfections which must ultimately entail the worst

consequences, and yet be hindered in the endeavor to establish good habits in their stead, — that I had given it up altogether for a year and a half, and, as I thought, for ever. I was induced again to undertake this occupation in Warsaw, without due consideration, by the ill-founded hope that I should find this attempt more fortunate, and perhaps imperceptibly by a view to pecuniary advantage — a resolution the vanity of which has given rise to my present embarrassments. I now, on the contrary, feel every day more strongly the necessity of going over again, before the years of youth have altogether passed away, all those things which the too early praise of well-meaning but unwise teachers,—an academic course almost completed before my entrance on the proper age of youth, — and since that time, my constant dependence on circumstances, — have caused me to neglect; and resigning all the ambitious views which have impeded my progress, to train myself to all of which I am capable, and leave the rest to Providence. This object I cannot attain anywhere more surely than in my fatherland. I have parents, who cannot, indeed, relieve my necessities, but with whom I can live at less expense than elsewhere. I can there occupy myself with literary pursuits — my true means of culture, to which I must devote myself, and for which I have too much respect to print anything of the truth of which I am not perfectly certain. By a residence in my native province, too, I could most easily obtain, as a village pastor, the perfect literary quiet which I desire until my faculties are matured. My best course thus seems to be to return home; — but I am deprived of the means: I

have only two ducats, and even these are not my own, for I have yet to pay for my lodgings. There appears, then, to be no rescue for me from this situation, unless I can find some one who, although unknown to me, yet in reliance upon my honor, will advance me the necessary sum for the expenses of my journey, until the time when I can calculate with certainty on being able to make repayment. I know no one to whom I could offer this security without fear of being laughed at to my face, except you, excellent man.

"It is my maxim never to ask anything from another, without having first of all examined whether I myself, were the circumstances inverted, would do the same thing for some one else. In the present case I have found that, supposing I had it in my power, I would do this for any person of whom I believed that he was animated by the principles by which I know that I myself am now governed.

"I am so convinced of a certain sacrifice of honor in thus placing it in pledge, that the very necessity of giving you this assurance seems to deprive me of a part of it myself; and the deep shame which thus falls upon me is the reason why I cannot make an application of this kind verbally, for I must have no witnesses of that shame. My honor seems to me really doubtful until the engagement is fulfilled, because it is always possible for the other party to suppose that I may never fulfil it. Thus I know, that if you, sir, should consent to my request, I would think of you with heartfelt respect and gratitude indeed, but yet with a kind of shame; and that only after I had redeemed my word, would it be

possible for me to call to mind with perfect satisfaction an acquaintance with which I hope to be honored during life. I know that these feelings arise from temperament, not from principle, and are perhaps reprehensible; but I cannot eradicate them, until principle has acquired sufficient strength to take their place, and so render them superfluous. So far, however, I can rely upon my principles, that, were I capable of forfeiting my word pledged to you, I should despise myself for ever afterwards, and could never again venture to cast a glance into my own soul; principles which constantly reminded me of you, and of my dishonor, must needs be cast aside altogether, in order to free me from the most painful self-reproach.

"If I were well assured of the existence of such a mode of thinking as this in a man, I would do that for him with confidence which I now ask from you. *How*, and *by what means* I could assure myself, were I in your place, of the existence of such principles, is likewise clear to me.

"If it be permitted me to compare very great things with very small, I argue from your writings, most honored sir, a character in their author above the ordinary mass of men, and, before I knew anything at all of your mode of acting in common life, I would have ventured to describe it as I now know it to be. For myself, I have only laid open before you a small part of my nature, at a time, however, when the idea never occurred to me of making such a use of your acquaintance; and my character is not sufficiently formed to express itself fully; — but to compensate for this, you

are without comparison a better judge of man than I am, and perhaps may have perceived, even from what you have seen of me, whether or not a love of truth and honor belongs to my character.

"Lastly — and I add this with shame — if I should be found capable of forfeiting my pledge, my worldly reputation is in your hands. It is my intention to become an author in my own name, and if I leave Königsberg, I wish to request from you introductions to some literary men of your acquaintance. To these, whose good opinion I would then owe to you, it would be your duty to communicate my disgrace; as it would generally be a duty, I think, to warn the world against a person of such incorrigible character as he must needs be, who could approach a man whose atmosphere is untainted by falsehood, and, by assuming the outward mien of honesty, deceive his acuteness, and so laugh to scorn all virtue and honor.

"These were the considerations, sir, which induced me to write this letter. I am very indifferent about that which does not lie within my power, more indeed through temperament and personal experience, than on principle. It is not the first time that I have been in difficulties out of which I could see no way; but it would be the first time that I remained in them, if I did so now. Curiosity as to what is to come of it, is generally all that I feel in such emergencies. I merely adopt the means which appear the best to my mind, and then calmly await the consequence. And I can do this the more easily in the present case, as I place it in the hands of a good and wise man. But in an-

other point of view, I send off this letter with unwonted anxiety. Whatever may be your determination, I shall lose something of comfort and satisfaction in my relation towards you. If it be in the affirmative, I can indeed again acquire what I have lost; — if in the negative, never.

* * * * *

"For the tone which predominates in this letter, I cannot, sir, ask your pardon. It is one of the distinctions of sages, that he who speaks to them, speaks as a man to men. As soon as I can venture to hope that I do not disturb you, I shall wait upon you, to learn your resolution; and I am, with heartfelt reverence and admiration," &c., &c., &c.

It is difficult to conceive of circumstances short of absolute inability, which could induce a man of refined sentiments, and especially a scholar and a philosopher, to refuse the request contained in this singular letter. We are not informed of the cause of Kant's refusal, and can therefore only hope that it arose from no motive less honorable than that which animated his noble-minded suitor. But the request *was* refused, and Fichte once more reduced to extremity. He endeavored to dispose of the manuscript of his "Kritik aller Offenbarung;"—but Hartung, the bookseller to whom Kant had recommended him to apply, was from home, and he offered it in vain to any other. The very heroism of his life seemed to be the source of his ever-recurring difficulties;—and, truly, he who has resolved to lead a life of high purpose and endeavor, must be

content to relinquish the advantages which are the common reward of plodding worldliness or successful knavery. He does relinquish them without a murmur, or rather he never seeks them ; — his thoughts aspire to a loftier recompense, and that he will surely attain.

But light once more dawned on these dark and hopeless prospects ; and that from a quarter whence it was least of all expected. When the little money which he had remaining was almost entirely exhausted, he received an invitation, through the Court-preacher Schulz, to a tutorship in the family of the Count of Krokow, in the neighborhood of Dantzig. Although, as we have seen, his views were now directed to a life of literary exertion, yet necessity compelled him to accept this proposal ; and he entered on his new employment, experiencing the most friendly reception and the kindest attentions. The amiable character and excellent abilities of the Countess rendered his residence in her family not only happy, but interesting and instructive ;— his letters at this period are full of her praises. This fortunate appointment was but the beginning of many years of uninterrupted prosperity which now awaited him. Fortune seemed to have tired of her relentless persecutions, and now resolved to shine graciously upon his path.

Through the agency of his friends at Königsberg, he now made arrangements with Hartung for the publication of his "Kritik aller Offenbarung." When the book was submitted to the censorship of the Dean of the Theological Faculty at Halle, where it was to be

printed, he refused his sanction on account of the principle contained in it, — *That no proof of the divinity of a revelation is to be derived from an appeal to miracles occurring in connection with it, but that the question of its authenticity can be decided only by an examination of the contents of the supposed revelation.* Fichte urged that his book was a philosophical, not a theological essay, and therefore did not properly come under the cognizance of the Theological Faculty; — but this plea was urged in vain. His friends advised him to withdraw the obnoxious passages; even Schulz, who united theological orthodoxy with his ardent Kantism, advised him to do so. But on this point Fichte was inflexible; he determined that the book should be printed entire, or not printed at all. He resolved, however, to consult Kant on the subject, as the highest authority to whom he could appeal. As this question has now begun to excite some interest in the philosophico-theological world of England and America, it is deemed advisable to insert here the gist of this correspondence, embodying as it does the views of two most eminent men, who, both by their mental endowments and by their position in life, were better qualified than most other men to give an impartial judgment on the matter at issue.

Fichte to Kant.

"22*d January*, 1792.

"A friend whom I respect has written to me a kind and touching letter upon this subject, in which he requests that, in the event of a possible revision of the

work during the delay which has occurred in printing, I should endeavor to set two points, upon which we are at issue, in another light. I have said, that faith in a given revelation cannot reasonably be founded upon belief in miracles, because no miracle is demonstrable *as such*; but I have added in a note, that it may be allowable to employ the idea of miracles having occurred in connection with a revelation, in order to direct the attention of those, who need the aid of out ward and sensible manifestations, to the other sufficient grounds upon which the revelation may be received as divine; — the only modification of the former principle which I can admit. I have said, further, that a revelation cannot extend *the materials* either of our dogmatic or our moral knowledge; but I admit, that upon transcendental objects, in the *fact* of whose existence we believe, but can know nothing whatever of the mode of that existence, it may furnish us with something in the room of experience—something which, for those who so conceive of such matters, shall possess a subjective truth, — which, however, is not to be received as a substantial addition to, but only as an embodied and formal manifestation of, those spiritual things possessed by us *a priori*. Notwithstanding continued reflection upon these points, I have hitherto found no reason which can justify me in altering my conclusions. May I venture to ask you, sir, as the most competent judge, to tell me in two words, whether any other results upon these points are to be sought for, and if so, in what direction; — or if these are the only grounds on which a critique of the Revelation-idea can

safely proceed? If you will favor me with these two words of reply, I shall make no use of them inconsistent with the deep respect I entertain for you. As to my friend's letter, I have already said in answer, that I do not cease to give my attention to the subject, and shall always be ready to retract what I am convinced is erroneous.

"As to the prohibition of the censor, after the clearly-declared object of the essay, and the tone which predominates throughout its pages, I can only wonder at it. I cannot understand where the Theological Faculty acquired the right to apply their censorship to such a mode of treating such a subject."

Kant's Reply.

"*2d February*, 1792.

"You desire to be informed by me whether any remedy can be found against the strict censorship under which your book has fallen, without entirely laying it aside. I answer, none; — so far as, without having read the book thoroughly, I can determine from what your letter announces as its leading principle, namely, — 'that faith in a given revelation cannot reasonably be founded on a belief in miracles.'

"For it inevitably follows from this, that a religion can contain only such articles of faith as likewise belong to the province of pure reason. This principle is in my opinion quite unobjectionable, and neither abolishes the subjective necessity of a revelation, nor of miracle (for it may be assumed, that whether or not it might have been possible for reason, unaided by rev-

elation, to have discovered those articles, which, now when they *are* actually before us, may indeed be comprehended by reason ;—yet it may have been necessary *to introduce* them by miracles,—which, however, now when religion can support itself and its articles of faith, need not longer be relied upon as the foundation of belief) :—but according to the maxims which seem to be adopted by the censor, this principle will not carry you through. For, according to these, certain writings must be received into the profession of faith *according to their letter*, since it is difficult for human understanding to comprehend them, and much more for human reason to conceive of them as true ; and hence they really need the continued support of miracle, and thus only can become articles of reasonable belief. The view which represents revelation as merely a sensible manifestation of these principles in accommodation to human weakness, and hence as possessed of subjective truth only, is not sufficient for the censor, for his views demand the recognition of its objective truth according to the letter.

" One way, however, remains open, to bring your book into harmony with the ideas of the censor: *i. e.*, if you can make him comprehend and approve the distinction between a *dogmatic belief* raised above all doubt, and a mere *moral admission*, resting on the insufficiency of reason to satisfy its own wants ; for then the faith which good moral sentiment reposes upon miracle may probably thus express itself: 'Lord, I believe'— (that is, I *receive* it willingly, although cannot *prove* it sufficiently) — 'help thou mine unbe-

lief!'—that is, 'I have a moral faith in respect of all that I can draw from the miraculous narrative for the purposes of inward improvement, and I desire to possess an historical belief in so far as that can contribute to the same end. My unintentional non-belief is not confirmed unbelief.' But you will not easily make this distinction acceptable to a censor who, it is to be feared, makes historical belief an unconditional religious duty.

"With these hastily, but not inconsiderately thrown out ideas, you may do whatever seems good to you (provided you are yourself convinced of their truth), without making any direct or indirect allusion to him who communicates them."

Fichte to Kant.

"*17th February*, 1792.

"Your kind letter has given me much gratification, as well on account of the goodness which so soon fulfilled my request, as on account of the matter it contains: upon that subject I now feel all the peace of mind which, next to one's own conviction, the authority of a man who is honored above all other men can give.

"If I have rightly conceived your meaning, I have actually pursued in my work the middle course which you point out—of distinguishing between an affirmative belief, and a faith founded on moral considerations. I have endeavored carefully to distinguish between that which, according to my principle, is the only possible and reasonable kind of faith in the divinity of a given revelation (that faith, namely, which has for its object

only a *certain form* of the truths of religion) — and the belief which accepts these truths in themselves as postulates of pure reason. This faith is only a free acceptance of the divine origin of a particular form of religious truth grounded on experience of the efficacy of such a form as a means of moral perfection; — such an acceptance, indeed, as no one can prove either to himself or others, but which, on the other hand, cannot be refuted; an acceptance which is merely subjective, and, unlike the faith of pure reason, is not universally binding, since it is founded on individual experience alone. I believe that I have placed this distinction in a tolerably clear light, and I have endeavored to set forth fully the practical consequences of these principles: namely, that while they save us the labor of forcing our own subjective convictions upon others, they secure to every one the undisturbed possession of everything in religion which he can apply to his own improvement, and thus silence the opponents of positive religion, not less than its dogmatical defenders — principles for which I do not deserve the anger of the truth-loving theologian. But yet it has so fallen out; and I am now determined to leave the book as it is, and to allow the publisher to deal with the matter as he chooses."

The difficulty which gave rise to the preceding letters was happily got rid of by a change in the censorship. The new dean, Dr. Knapp, did not partake in the scruples of his predecessor; he gave his consent to the publication, and the work appeared at Easter,

1792. At first, it was universally ascribed to Kant. The journals devoted to the Critical Philosophy teemed with laudatory notices, until at length Kant found it necessary publicly to disclaim the paternity of the book by disclosing its real author.

The "Kritik aller Offenbarung" is an attempt to determine the natural and necessary conditions, under which alone a revelation from a superior intelligence to man is possible, and consequently to lay down the criteria by which anything that claims the character of such a revelation is to be tested. The design, as well as the execution, of the work is strikingly characteristic of its author; for, although the form of the Kantean philosophy is much more distinctly impressed upon this, his first literary production, than upon his subsequent writings, yet it does not, it cannot conceal those brilliant qualities to which he owed his future fame. That profound and searching intellect, which, in the province of pure metaphysics, casts aside as fallacious and deceptive those solid-seeming principles on which ordinary men are content to take their stand, and clearing its way to the most hidden depths of thought, sought there a firm foundation on which to build a structure of human knowledge, whose summit should tower as high above common faith as its base was sunk deep below common observation, — does here, when applied to a question of practical judgment, exhibit the same clearness of vision, strength of thought, and subtilty of discrimination. In the conduct of this inquiry, Fichte manifests the same single eye to truth, and reverent devotion to her when found, which characterize all his

writings and his life. His book has nothing in common with those superficial attacks upon revelation, or equally superficial defences of it, which are so rife in our days, and which afford so much scope for petty personal animosities. The mathematician, while constructing his theorem, does not pause to inquire who may be interested in its future applications; nor does the philosopher, while calmly settling the conditions and principles of *knowledge*, concern himself about what *opinions* may ultimately be found incompatible with them: — these may take care of themselves. Far above the dark vortex of theological strife in which punier intellects chafe and vex themselves in vain, Fichte struggles forward to the sunshine of pure thought, which sectarianism cannot see, because its weakened vision is already filled with a borrowed and imperfect light. "Form and style," he says in his preface, "are my affair; the censure or contempt which these may incur affects me alone; — and that is of little moment. The result is the affair of truth, and *that* is of moment. That must be subjected to a strict, but careful and impartial examination. I, at least, have acted impartially. I may have erred, and it would be astonishing if I had not. What measure of correction I may deserve, let the public decide. Every judgment, however expressed, I shall thankfully acknowledge; every objection which seems incompatible with the cause of truth, I shall meet as well as I can. To truth I solemnly devote myself, at my first entrance into public life. Without respect of party or of reputation, I shall always *acknowledge* that to be truth which I recognize as such; come whence it may; and

never acknowledge that which I do not believe. The public will pardon me for having thus spoken of myself, on this first and only occasion. It may be of little importance to the world to receive this assurance, but it is of importance to me to call upon it to bear witness to this my solemn vow." Never was vow more nobly fulfilled!

Early in 1973, Fichte left Dantzig for Zurich, to accomplish the wish dearest to his heart. The following extracts are from a letter written shortly before his departure: —

To Johanna Rahn.

"*Dantzig, 5th March*, 1793.

"In June, or at the latest July, I shall be with thee: but I should wish to enter the walls of Zurich as thy husband—Is that possible? Thy kind heart will give no hindrance to my wishes; but I do not know the circumstances. But I hope, and this hope comforts me much.——God! what happiness dost thou prepare for me, the unworthy!—— I have never felt so deeply convinced that my existence is not to be in vain for the world, as when I read thy letter. What I receive in thee, I have not deserved; it can therefore be only a means of strengthening me for the labor and toil which yet await me. Let thy life but flow smoothly on, — thou sweet, dear one!

"Thou wilt fashion thyself by me! What I could perhaps give thee, thou dost not need; what thou canst bestow on me, I need much. Do thou, good, kind one, shed a lasting peace upon this tempestuous heart;

pour gentle and winning mildness over my fiery zeal for the ennobling of my fellow men. By thee will I fashion myself, till I can go forth again more usefully.

"I have great, glowing prospects. My ambition (pride rather) thou canst understand. It is to purchase my place in the human race with deeds, to bind up with my existence eternal consequences for humanity and the whole spiritual world; no one need know that *I* do it, if it be only done. What I shall be in the civil world, I know not. If instead of immediate *activity* I be destined to *speech*, my desire has already anticipated thy wish, that it should be rather from a pulpit than from a chair. There is at present no want of prospects of that kind. Even from Saxony I receive most profitable invitations. I am about to go to Lubeck and Hamburg. In Dantzig they are unwilling to let me go. All that for the future! That I am not idle, I have shown by refusing, within this half year, many invitations which would have been very alluring to idlers. For the present I will be nothing but *Fichte*.

"I may perhaps desire an office in a few years. I hope it will not be wanting. Till then I can get what I require by my pen: at least, it has never failed me yet, in my many wanderings and sacrifices."

Fichte arrived in Zurich on the 16th day of June, 1793, after having once more visited his parents, and received their cordial approbation of his future plans. In consequence, however, of some delays arising out of the laws of that state affecting foreigners, it was not until the 22d October that his marriage with Johanna

Rahn took place. After a short tour in Switzerland, in the course of which his already wide-spread fame brought him into contact with several distinguished men, — Baggesen, Pestalozzi, &c., — he took up his residence in the house of his father-in-law. Here he enjoyed for several months a life of undisturbed repose, in the society of her whose love had been his stay in times of adversity and doubt, and now gave to prosperity a keener relish and a holier aim.

But while happiness and security dwelt in the peaceful Swiss canton, the rest of Europe was torn asunder by that fearful convulsion which made the close of last century the most remarkable period in the history of the world. Principles which had once bound men together in bonds of truth and fealty had become false and hollow mockeries; and that evil time had arrived in which those who were nominally the leaders and rulers of the people had ceased to command their reverence and attachment; nay, by countless oppressions and follies, had become the objects of their bitter hatred and contempt. And now one nation speaks forth the word which all are struggling to utter, and soon every eye is turned upon France, — the theatre on which the new act in the drama of human history is to be acted; where freedom and right are once more to become realities; where man, no longer a mere appendage to the soil, is to start forth on a new career of activity and honor, and show the world the spectacle of an ennobled and regenerated race. The enslaved of all nations rouse themselves at the shout of deliverance; the patriot's heart throbs higher at the cry — the poet dreams of

a new golden age — the philosopher looks with eager eye for the solution of the mighty problem of human destiny. All, alas! are doomed to disappointment; and over the grave where their hopes lie buried, a lesson of fearful significance stands inscribed in characters of desolation and blood, proclaiming to all ages, that where the law of liberty is not written upon the soul, outward freedom is a mockery, and unchecked power a curse.

In 1793 Fichte published his "Contributions to the correction of public opinion upon the French Revolution." The leading principle of this work is, that there is, and can be, no absolutely unchangeable political constitution, because none absolutely perfect can be realized; — the relatively best constitution must therefore carry within itself the principle of change and improvement. And if it be asked from whom this improvement should proceed, it is replied, that all parties to the political contract ought equally to possess this right. And by this political contract is to be understood, not any actual and recorded agreement — for both the old and new opponents of this view think they can destroy it at once by the easy remark, that we have no historical proof of the existence of such a contract — but the abstract idea of a State, which, as the peculiar foundation of all rights, should lie at the bottom of every actual political fabric. The work comprises also an inquiry concerning the privileged classes in society, particularly the nobility and clergy, whose prerogatives are subjected to a prolonged and rigid scrutiny. In particular, the conflict between the universal rights of

reason, and historical privileges which often involve great injustice, is brought prominently into notice. This book brought upon Fichte the charge of being a democrat, which was afterwards extended into that of atheism! The following passage is from his own defence against the former charge, written at a later period: —

"And so I am a democrat! — And what *is* a democrat? One who represents the democratic form of government as the only just one, and recommends its introduction? I should think, if he does this merely in his writings, that, even under a monarchical government, the refutation of his error, if it be an error, might be left to other literary men. So long as he makes no direct attempt to overthrow the existing government and put his own scheme in its place, I do not see how his opinions can come before the judgment-seat of the State, which takes cognizance of actions only. However, I know that my opponents think otherwise on this point. Let them think so, if they choose: does the accusation then justly apply to me? Am I a democrat in the foregoing sense of that word? They may indeed have neither heard nor read anything about me, since they settled this idea in their minds, and wrote 'democrat' over my head in their imaginations. Let them look at my 'Principles of Natural Law,' vol. i. p. 189, &c. It is impossible to name any writer who has declared more decidedly, and on stronger grounds, *against* the democratic form of government, as an absolutely illegitimate form. Let them make a fair extract from that book. They will find that I require a submission to law, a jurisdiction of law over

the actions of the citizen, such as was never before demanded by any teacher of jurisprudence, and has never been attempted to be realized in any constitution. Most of the complaints which I have heard against this system, have turned on the assertion that it derogated too much from the freedom (licentiousness and lawlessness) of men. I am thus far from preaching anarchy.

"But they do not attach a definite and scientific meaning to the word. If all the circumstances in which they use this expression were brought together, it might perhaps be possible to say what particular sense they annex to it; and it is quite possible that, in this sense, I may be a very decided democrat; — it is at least so far certain, that I would rather not be at all, than be the subject of caprice and not of law."

During the period of his residence at Zurich, however, Fichte's attention was occupied with another subject, more important to science and to his own future fame, than his political speculations. This was the philosophical system on which his reputation chiefly rests. It would be altogether out of place in the present Memoir to enter at large upon a subject so vast and profound, if indeed it might not prove altogether impos sible to present, in any form intelligible to the ordinary English reader, the results of these abstruse and difficult speculations. Yet the peculiarities of Fichte's philosophical system are so intimately bound up with the personal character of its author, that both lose something of their completeness when considered apart from each other. And it is principally with a view to illus-

trate the harmony between his life and his philosophy, that an attempt is here made to point out some of its distinguishing features. As Fichte's system may be considered the complement of those which preceded it, we must view it in connection with the more important of these; and for the same reason we shall speak of it here, not as it shaped itself at first in the mind of its author, but in the developed and finally completed form in which he taught it at a later period of his life.

The final results of the philosophy of Locke were two-fold. In France, the school of Condillac, imitating the example of the English philosopher rather than following out his first principles, occupied itself exclusively with the phenomena of sensation, leaving out of sight the no less indisputable facts to which reflection is our sole guide. The consequence was a system of unmixed materialism, a deification of physical nature, and ultimately, avowed atheism. In Great Britain, the philosophy of experience was more justly treated: both sources of human knowledge which Locke indicated at the outset of his inquiry — although in the body of his essay he analyzed one of them only — were recognized by his followers in his own land, until Bishop Berkeley resolved the phenomena of sensation into those of reflection; and the same method which in France led to materialism, in England produced a system of intellectual idealism. Berkeley's principles were pushed to the extreme by Hume, who, applying to the phenomena of reflection precisely the same analysis which Berkeley applied to those of sensation, demolished the whole fabric of human know-

ledge, and revealed, under the seemingly substantial foundations on which men had hitherto built their faith, a yawning gulf of impenetrable obscurity and skepticism. Feeling, thought, nay consciousness itself, become but fleeting phantasms without any abiding subject in which they inhere.

It may be safely affirmed, that notwithstanding the outcry which greeted the publication of the "Essay of Human Nature," and the senseless virulence which still loads the memory of its author with abuse, none of his critics have hitherto succeeded in detecting a fallacy in his main argument. Those distinguished philosophers who are generally known by the name of the Scotch School, or the School of Common Sense, although deserving of all gratitude for their acute investigations into the intellectual and moral powers of man, have yet confined themselves chiefly to the department of psychological analysis, and have thrown little direct light on the great difficulties of metaphysical speculation. This was reserved for the modern school of Germany, of which Kant may be considered the head. Stewart, although contemporary with the philosopher of Königsberg, seems to have had not only an imperfect, but a quite erroneous conception of his doctrines.

Kant admitted the validity of Hume's conclusions, on the premises from which he deduced them. He admitted that the human intellect could not go beyond itself, could not furnish us with any other than subjective knowledge. The impressions which we receive from without, having to pass through the prism of cer-

tain inherent faculties or "categories" of the understanding, by which their original character is modified, or perhaps altogether changed,—we are not entitled to draw from them any conclusions upon the nature of the source whence they emanate. But is the outward world, which we are thus forced to abandon to doubt, the only reality for man? Do we not find in consciousness something more than a cognitive faculty? We find besides, will, freedom, self-determination; and here is a world altogether independent of sense and of the knowledge of outward things. Freedom is the root, the very ground-work of our being; free determination is the most intimate and certain fact in our nature. But to this freedom we find an absolute law addressed, — the unconditional law of morality — demanding fulfilment. Here, then, in the super-sensual world of duty, of free obedience, of moral determination, we have the true world of man, in which the moral agent is the only existence, the moral act the only reality. Between the world of sense and the world of morality stands the æsthetic world, or the system of relations we hold to the outward world through our ideas of the beautiful, the sublime, &c.; — and these three worlds exhaust the elements of human consciousness.

But while Kant, by throwing the bridge of æsthetic feeling over the chasm which separates the sensible from the purely spiritual world, established an outward communication between them, he did not attempt to reconcile — he maintained the impossibility of reconciling — their essential opposition. It is in this reconciliation, — in tracing this opposition to its source,

— in the establishment of the unity of the sensual and super-sensual worlds, that Fichte's "Wissenchaftslehre" follows out and completes the philosophical system of which Kant had laid the foundation. In it, for the first time, philosophy becomes, not a theory of knowledge, but knowledge itself; for in it the apparent division of the subject thinking from the object thought of, is abolished by penetrating to the primitive unity out of which this opposition has arisen.

The origin of this opposition, and the principle by which it is to be reconciled, must be sought for in the nature of the thinking subject itself. What is our idea of that nature? We feel ourselves to be acted upon by influences from without, and on the other hand to exercise an influence on things without; limited ourselves, and at the same time the cause of limitation to something beyond us. But whence do we derive this double conception? It is not derived; — it is a part of ourselves. Let us try to conceive of our own being apart from any other — abstracted from all other existence. We cannot do it. The fundamental character of finite being is thus the supposition of itself (*thesis*); and of something opposed to itself (*antithesis*); which two conceptions are reciprocal, mutually imply each other, and are hence identical (*synthesis.*) The *Ego* supposes the *Non-Ego*, and is supposed in it; — the two conceptions are indissoluble; nay, they are but one conception. In the different aspects which this double conception assumes, we have an endless chain of finite and reciprocally active existences, forming together the abstract idea of *Finity*, which again supposes its oppo-

site, *Infinity*. As conceived of by the finite subject, the idea of infinity must come under the conditions of finite thought, and can thus only be the *Highest* that finite thought can reach — an absolute Ego, in whose self-determination *all* the Non-Ego is determined.

The aspect of the finite Ego towards the Non-Ego is practical; towards the infinite Ego, speculative. In the first relation we find ourselves surrounded by existences, over one part of which we exercise causality, and with the other (in whom we suppose an independent causality) we are in a state of reciprocal influence. In these relations the active and moral powers of man find their sphere. The moral law imparts to its objects — to all things whose existence is implied in its fulfilment — the same certainty which belongs to itself. The outward world cannot be unreal, for we have imperative duties to perform which demand its reality. Life ceases to be an empty show without truth or significance; — it is our field of duty, the theatre on which our moral destiny is to be wrought out. The voice of conscience, of highest reason, bids us know and love and honor beings like ourselves, and those beings crowd around us. The ends of their and our existence demand the powers and appliances of physical life for their attainment; — that life, and the means of sustaining and using it, stand before us. The world is nothing more than the *sphere* and *object* of human activity; it exists because the purposes of our moral life require its existence. Of the law of duty we are immediately certain; of the existence of the world we are assured by means of that previous certainty. Our

life begins with an action, not a thought; we do not act because we know, but we know because we are called upon to act.

But not only does the law of human activity require our belief in its immediate objects and implements; it also points to a purpose, an aim, in our actions lying beyond themselves, to which they stand related as means to an end. Not that the moral law of activity is dependent on the perception of this end — the moral law is absolute and imperative in itself — but we necessarily connect with our actions some future result as a consequence to which they inevitably tend, as the final accomplishment of the purpose which gave them birth. The moral sense cannot find such a fulfilment in the present life; — the forces of nature, the desires and passions of men constantly oppose its dictates. It revolts against the permanence of things as they now are, and unceasingly strives to make them better. Nor can the individual look for such an accomplishment of the moral law of his nature in the progressive improvement of his species. Were the highest grade of earthly perfection conceived and attained in the physical and moral world — (as it is conceivable and attainable) — reason would still propose a higher grade beyond it. And even this measure of perfection could not be appropriated by humanity as its own, — as the result of its own exertions, — but must be considered as the creation of an unknown power, by whose unseen agency the basest passions of men, and even their vices and crimes, have been made the instruments of this consummation; while too often their good resolutions appear

altogether lost to the world, or even to retard the purposes which they were apparently designed to promote. The chain of material causes and effects does not depend on the motives and feelings which prompt an action, but solely on the action itself; and the purposes of mere physical existence would be as well, or better, promoted by an unerring mechanism, than by the agency of free beings. Nevertheless, if moral obedience be a reasonable service, it must have its result; if the reason which commands it be not an utterly vain delusion, its law must be fulfilled. That law is the first principle of our nature, and it gives us the assurance, our faith in which no difficulty can shake, that no moral act can be fruitless, no work of reason utterly lost. A chain of causes and effects, in which freedom is superfluous and without aim, cannot thus be the limit of our existence; the law of our being cannot be fulfilled in the world of sense; — there must then be a super-sensual world in which it may be accomplished. In this purely spiritual world, *will* alone is the first link of a chain of consequences which pervades the whole invisible realm of being; as *action*, in the sensual world, is the first link of a material chain which runs through the whole system of nature. Will is the active living principle of the super-sensual world; it may break forth in a material act which belongs to the sensual world, and do there that which pertains to a material act to do; — but, independently of all physical manifestation, it flows forth in endless spiritual activity. Here human freedom is untrammeled by earthly obstructions, and the moral law of our being may find that accomplishment which it sought in vain in the world of sense.

But although we are immediately conscious that our will, our moral activity, must lead to consequences beyond itself, we yet cannot know *what* those consequences may be, nor *how* they are possible. In respect of the nature of these results, the present life is, in relation to the future, *a life in faith*. In the future life we shall possess these results, for we shall then make them the groundwork of new activity, and thus the future life will be, in relation to the present, *a life in sight*. But the spiritual world is even now with us, for we are already in possession of the principle from which it springs. Our will, our free activity, is the only attribute which is solely and exclusively our own; and by it we are already citizens of the eternal world; the kingdom of heaven is here, or nowhere — it cannot become more immediately present at any point of finite existence. This life is the beginning of our being; the outward world is freely given to us as a firm ground on which we may commence our course; the future life is its continuance, for which we must ourselves create a starting-period in the present; and should the aim of this second life prove as unattainable to finite power, as the end of the first is to us now, then the fresh strength, the firmer purpose, the clearer sight which shall be its immediate growth, will open to us another and a higher sphere of activity. But the world of duty is an infinite world; — every finite exertion has but a definite aim; — and beyond the highest point toward which our laboring being strives, a higher still appears; and to such progression we can conceive no end. By

free determination — in the effort after moral perfection, we have laid hold on eternal life.

In the physical world we see certain phenomena following each other with undeviating regularity. We cannot say that what we name *cause* has in itself any power over that which we call *effect*, — that there is any relation between them except that of invariable sequence. We suppose a law under which both subsist, which regulates the mode of their existence, and by the efficiency of which the order of their succession is determined. So likewise, in the spiritual world, we entertain the firmest conviction that our moral will is connected with certain consequences, though we cannot understand how mere will can of itself produce such consequences. We here again conceive of a law under which our will, and the will of all finite beings, exists, in virtue of which it is followed by certain results, and out of which all our relations with other beings arise. So far as our will is simply an internal act, complete in itself, it lies wholly within our own power ; — so far as it is a fact in the super-sensual world — the first of a train of spiritual consequences, it is not dependent on ourselves, but on the law which governs the super-sensual world. But the super-sensual world is a world of freedom, of living activity ; its principle cannot be a mechanical force, but must itself possess this freedom — this living activity. It can be nothing else than self-determining reason. But self-determining reason is will. The law of the super-sensual world must thus be a *Will :* — a will operating without material implement or manifestation ; which is in itself both act and pro-

duct — which is eternal and unchangeable ; so that on it finite beings may securely rely, as the physical man does on the laws of his world, — that through it, all their moral acts of will, and these only, shall lead to certain and unfailing results. *In* this Living Will, as the principle of the spiritual world, has our moral will its first consequence, and *through* Him its energy is propagated throughout the series of finite beings who are the products of the Infinite Will. He is the spiritual bond which unites all free beings together : not immediately can they know or influence each other, for they are separated from each other by an impassable barrier ; — their mutual knowledge comes through Him alone, to whom all are equally related. Our faith in duty, and in the objects of duty, is only faith in Him, in His wisdom, in His truth. He is thus the creator and sustainer of all things, for in Him alone all the thronging forms which people our dream of life, "live and move and have their being." All partake His essence : — material nature disappears, but its images are invested with a new reality. All our life is His life ; and we are eternal, for He is eternal. Birth and the grave are no more, but, in their stead, undying energy and immortal youth. Of Him — the Infinite One, — of the mode of His being, we know nothing, nor need we to know ; we cannot pierce the inaccessible light in which he dwells, but through the shadows which veil His presence from us, an endless stream of life and power and action flows around and about us, bearing us and all finite things onward to new life and love and beauty.

"The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light for ever shines; Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments."

All death in nature is birth,—the assumption of a new garment, to replace the old vesture which humanity has laid aside in its progress to higher being. And serene above all change, the unattainable object of all finite effort — fountain of our life — home of our spirits, — Thou art — the One Being, — the I AM, — for whom reason has no idea, and language no name.

"Sublime and living Will, named by no name, compassed by no thought, I may raise my soul to Thee, for Thou and I are not divided. Thy voice is heard within me, mine is heard by Thee, and all my thoughts, if they are good and true, live in Thee alone. In Thee, the Incomprehensible, I myself, and the world in which I live, stand clear before me; all the secrets of my existence are laid open, and perfect harmony arises in my soul.

"Thou art best known to the childlike, devoted, simple heart. To it Thou art the searcher of all hearts, who seest the minds of men; the ever-present true witness of their thoughts, who knowest if they are good, who knowest them though all the world know them not. Thou art the Father who ever desirest their good, who rulest all things for the best. To Thy will they resign themselves: 'Do with me,' they say, 'what Thou wilt; I know that it is good, for it is Thou who doest it.' The inquisitive understanding, which has heard

of Thee, but seen Thee not, would teach us Thy nature, and, as Thy image, shows us a monstrous and incongruous shape, which the sagacious laugh at, and the wise and good abhor.

" I hide my face before Thee, and lay my hand upon my mouth. *How* Thou art, and seemest to thine own being, I can never know, any more than I can assume Thy nature. After thousands upon thousands of spirit-lives, I shall comprehend Thee as little as I do now in this earthly house. That which I conceive, becomes finite through my very conception of it, and this can never, even by endless exaltation, rise into the infinite. Thou differest from men, not in degree but in nature. In every stage of their advancement they think of Thee as a greater *man*, and still a greater, but never as God — the Infinite, — whom no measure can mete. I have only this discursive, progressive thought, and I can conceive of no other. How can I venture to ascribe it to Thee ? In the idea of *person* there are imperfections, limitations. How can I clothe Thee with it without these ?

" I will not attempt that which the imperfection of my nature forbids, and which would be useless to me : — *how* Thou art, I may not know. But Thy relations to me — the mortal — and to all mortals, lie open before my eyes, were I only what I should be ; — they surround me as clearly as the consciousness of my own existence. *Thou workest* in me the knowledge of my duty, of my vocation in the world of reasonable beings : — *how*, I know not, nor need I to know. *Thou knowest* what I think and what I will : — *how* Thou

canst know, through what act Thou bringest about that consciousness, I cannot understand, — nay, I know that the idea of an act, of a particular act of consciousness, belongs to me alone, and not to Thee. *Thou willest* that my free obedience shall bring with it eternal consequences : — the act of Thy will I cannot comprehend — I only know that it is not like mine. *Thou doest*, and Thy will itself is the deed ; but the way of Thy working is not as my ways — I cannot trace it. *Thou livest and art*, for Thou knowest and willest and workest, omnipresent to finite reason ; but Thou *art not* as *I* now and always must conceive of being." *

Such is a very broken and imperfect outline of the most complete system of transcendental idealism ever offered to the world. To those few among British students, who, amid the prevailing degradation of sentiment and frivolity of thought, have pondered the deep mysteries of being until the common logic, which pretends to grasp its secret, seems a vain and presumptuous trifling with questions which lie far beyond its reach, and who find in the theological solution but a dry and worthless husk which conceals the kernel of truth it was only meant to preserve, — to such it may

* Bestimmung des Menschen, Book iii. — This is the most popular exposition of Fichte's philosophy which exists, and from it the substance of the preceding abstract has been taken. It was first published in 1799, at Berlin. A complete and uniform edition of Fichte's works is at present (1845) in course of publication, under the superintendence of his son.

be no unacceptable service to have pointed the way to a modern Academe, where the moral dignity of the Athenian sage is united with the poetic sublimity and intellectual keenness of his two most distinguished pupils. If by such humble guidance any should be induced to turn aside towards that retreat, let them not be deterred if at first the path should seem to lack something of the smoothness of the well-trodden highway on which they have hitherto travelled; — let them proceed courageously; — it will lead them into calm sunshine, and beside clear and refreshing streams; — nor shall they return thence without nobler thoughts and higher aspirations.

Fichte lived in close retirement in Zurich. The manners of the inhabitants did not please him, and he seldom came out into society. His wife, his father-in-law, Lavater, and a few others, composed his circle. It is pleasing to know that the celebrated and venerable preacher preserved, even in advanced age, a keen relish for new truth — a perfect openness of mind not frequently met with in his profession. At his request Fichte prepared a short course of lectures, by which his friends might be introduced to an acquaintance with the Critical Philosophy, the fame of which had now reached Switzerland. At the conclusion of the lectures, Lavater addressed a letter of thanks to his young instructor, full of expressions of gratitude and esteem, in which he styles himself his "pupil, friend, and fellow-man." Up to the period of his death, this excellent man retained the warmest feelings of friendship towards the

philosopher; — and the following lines, written some years after Fichte's departure from Zurich, whatever may be their value in other respects, serve at least to show the respect, almost approaching to reverence, with which Fichte was regarded by one who was himself no ordinary man: —

"Denkzettel nach meinem Tode, an Herrn Professor Fichte—1800.

"Unerreichbarer Denkner, Dein Daseyn beweist mir das Daseyn
Eines ewigen Geistes, dem hohe Geister entstrahlen!
Könntest je Du zweifeln: ich stellte Dich selbst vor Dich selbst nur;
Zeigte Dir in Dir selbst den Strahl des ewigen Geistes."

Although Fichte had as yet published nothing to which his name was attached, he had nevertheless acquired an extensive philosophical reputation. In several powerful and searching criticisms which appeared in the "Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung," the hand of the author of the "Critique of Revelation" was discovered. He was now generally looked upon as the man who was destined to complete the philosophy of Kant. He was thus led into literary correspondence with some of the most distinguished men of the day. At the head of these must be placed Reinhold, the professor of philosophy at Jena, who had hitherto stood first among the disciples of Kant. The relation between these two celebrated men was a most remarkable one. Although their characters were very different, although they never saw each other, they lived on terms of the most intimate and trustful confidence, such as is commonly attained by long-tried friendship alone. In their extensive correspondence, Fitchte's powerful and

commanding intellect evidently possesses great ascendency over the more diffident and pliable nature of Reinhold; but his influence never interferes with the mental freedom of his friend. On the other hand, Reinhold's open and enthusiastic character, and his pure love of truth, engaged the warm affection and sympathy of his more daring correspondent; — while the frequent misunderstandings, which lend an almost dramatic interest to their letters, afford room for the exhibition of manly and generous kindness in both. In 1797 Reinhold abandoned his own system and accepted the "Wissenschaftslehre," announcing the change to Fichte in the following terms: —

"I have at length come to understand your 'Wissenschaftslehre,' or what is the same thing to me — philosophy without nickname. It now stands before me as a perfect whole, founded on itself — the pure conception of self-conscious reason, — the mirror of our better selves. Individual parts are still obscure to me, but they cannot now deprive me of my comprehension of the whole; and their number is every day diminishing. Beside it lie the ruins of the edifice which cost me so much time and labor, in which I thought to dwell so securely and commodiously, to entertain so many guests, — in which I laughed, not without self-gratulation, over so many Kantists who mistook the scaffolding for the house itself. This catastrophe would have caused me much pain for a time, if it had happened by the hand of skepticism."

"Adieu! I salute you with deepest gratitude. Is personal intercourse absolutely necessary to the growth

of friendship ? I doubt it. For indeed it is not mere gratitude, not mere reverence, — it is heartfelt love that I feel for you, since I now, through your philosophy, understand yourself."

In Fichte's literary correspondence from Zurich we find the first intimations of his departure from the system of Kant, and his plan of a complete and comprehensive philosophy. He could not rest satisfied with results alone, unless he could perceive the grounds on which they rested. His reason imperatively demanded absolute unity of conception, without separation, without division, — above all, without opposition. Writing to Niethammer, in October 1793, he says — " My conviction is that Kant has only *indicated* the truth, but neither unfolded nor proved it. This singular man either has a power of divining truth, without being himself conscious of the grounds on which it rests ; or he has not esteemed his age worthy of the communication of those grounds ; or he has shrunk from attracting that superhuman reverence during his life, which sooner or later must be his in some degree." And as the great idea of his own system dawned upon his mind, he says to Stephani — " I have discovered a new principle, from which all philosophy can easily be deduced. . . In a couple of years we shall have a philosophy with all the clearness of geometrical evidence." — To the development of this scheme he now devoted all the energies of his powerful intellect. He refused an invitation to become tutor to the Prince of Mecklenberg-Strelitz : — " I desire," he says, " nothing but leisure

to execute my plan, — then fortune may do with me what it will."

But his studies were soon broken in upon by a call of another and more important nature. This was his appointment as Professor *Supernumerarius* of Philosophy at the University of Jena, in room of Reinhold, who removed to Kiel. The distinguished honor of this invitation, unasked and unexpected as it was, and the extensive field of usefulness which it opened to him, determined Fichte at once to accept it. He endeavored to obtain a postponement of the period for commencing his duties, which had been fixed for Easter, 1794, in order that, by the more complete elaboration of the principle which he had discovered, he might be able to elevate his philosophy at once to the rank of a positive science. For this purpose he requested a year's delay. But as it was considered that the interest of the University would be prejudiced by the chair remaining so long vacant, his request was refused, — with permission, however, to devote the greater part of his time, during the first year, to study. He therefore sent an unconditional acceptance, and plunged at once into the most arduous preparations for his new duties.

Weimar and its neighboring University was at this time the focus of German literature and learning. The Grand Duke Charles Augustus had gathered around him the most distinguished men of his age, and Wieland, Herder, Goethe, Schiller and Humboldt, shed a more than Medicean lustre upon the little Saxon Court. Probably at no other time was so much high genius,

engaged in every department of mental exertion, gathered together in one spot. The University, too, was the most numerously frequented of any in Germany, not by the youth of Saxony alone, but by students from almost every part of Europe: Switzerland, Denmark, Poland, Hungary, the free cities, and even France, sent their sons to Jena for education. The brilliant intellectual circle at Weimar presented to the cultivated mind attractions which could be found nowhere else, whilst at Jena the academic teacher found a most extensive and honorable field for the exercise of his powers. It was to this busy scene of mental activity that Fichte was called from his Swiss retreat, — to the society of the greatest living men, — to the instruction of this thronging crowd from all surrounding nations. Previous to his own appearance, he published, as a programme of his lectures, the "Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre oder der Sogenannten Philosophie." His reputation, and the bold originality of his system, drew universal attention. Expectation was strained to the utmost; so that those who had marked the rapid growth of his fame, had great apparent reason to fear that it might prove short-lived. But notwithstanding the shortness of the time allowed him for preparation, he entered upon his course with a clear perception of the task that lay before him, and confident reliance on his own power to fulfil the duties to which he was called.

He arrived at Jena on the 18th of May, 1794, and was received with great kindness by his colleagues at the University. On the 23d he delivered his first lecture. The largest hall in Jena, although crowded to

the roof, proved insufficient to contain the audience. His singular and commanding address, his fervid, fiery eloquence, the rich profusion of his thoughts, following each other in the most convincing sequence, and modelled with the sharpest precision, astonished and delighted his hearers. His triumph was complete ; — he left the Hall the most popular Professor of the greatest University in Germany. The following acute and graphic remarks on this subject, from Forberg's "Fragmenten aus meinen Papieren," afford us some glimpse of the opinions entertained of him by his contemporaries at Jena : —

"*Jena*, 12*th May*, 1794.

"I look with great confidence to Fichte, who is daily expected here. But I would have had still greater confidence in him if he had written the 'Kritik der Offenbarung' twenty years later. A young man who ventures to write a masterpiece must commonly suffer for it. He is what he is, and he will not be what he might have been. He has spent his strength too soon, and his later fruits will at least want ripeness. A great mind has no merit if it does not possess sufficient resignation *not to appear* great for a time, that thereby it may become greater. If a man cannot sacrifice a dozen years' fame as an offering to truth, what else can he lay upon her altar ? I believe that Reinhold's theory has done much injury to the study of the Kantean philosophy, but that is nothing to the injury it has done to the author himself. His philosophy is finished for this world, — nothing more is to be expected from him but polemics and reminiscences. Fichte is not here yet, —

but I am eager to know whether he has anything still to learn. It would be almost a wonder if he has, considering the incense that they burn before him. Oh! there is nothing so easily unlearned as the power of learning."

"*7th December*, 1794.

"Since Reinhold has left us, his philosophy (with us at least) has expired. Every trace of the "Philosophy without nickname" has vanished from among the students. Fichte is believed in, as Reinhold never was believed in. They understand him indeed even less than they did his predecessor; but they believe all the more obstinately on that account. *Ego* and *Non-Ego* are now the symbols of the philosophers of yesterday, as *substance* and *form* were formerly.

"Fichte's philosophy is, so to speak, more philosophical than Reinhold's. You *hear* him going digging and seeking after truth. In rough masses he brings it forth from the deep, and throws it from him. He does not *say* what he will do; he *does* it. Reinhold's doctrine was rather an announcement of a philosophy, than a philosophy itself. He has never fulfilled his promises. Not unfrequently did he give forth the promise for the fulfilment. He never will fulfil them, — for he is now past away. Fichte seems really determined to work upon the world through his philosophy. The tendency to restless activity which dwells in the breast of every noble youth, he would carefully nourish and cultivate, that it may in due season bring forth fruit. He seizes every opportunity of teaching that action, action, is the vocation of man; whereby it is only to

be feared that the majority of young men who lay the maxim to heart, may look upon this summons to action as only a summons to demolition. And, strictly speaking, the principle is false. Man is not called upon to act, but to act justly; if he cannot act without acting unjustly, he should remain inactive. . . .

"Every reader of Kant or Fichte is seized by a deep feeling of the superiority of these mighty minds; who wrestle with their subjects, as it were, to grind them to powder; who seem to say all that they do say to us, only that we may conjecture how much more they could say.

"All the truth that J—— has written is not worth a tenth part of the false which Fichte may have written. The one gives me a small number of known truths; the other gives me perhaps one truth, but in doing so, opens before me the prospect of an infinity of unknown truths. . . . . .

"It is certain that in Fichte's philosophy there is quite a different spirit from that which pervades the philosophy of his predecessor. The spirit of the latter is a weak, fearful spirit, which timidly includes wide, narrow, and narrowest shades of meaning between the hedges and fences of a 'to some extent'— and 'in so far;' a weak, exhausted spirit, which conceals (and ill-conceals) its poverty of thought behind the mantle of scholastic phraseology, and whose philosophy is form without substance, a skeleton without flesh and blood, body without life, promise without fulfilment. But the spirit of Fichte's philosophy is a proud and bold spirit, for which the domain of human knowledge,

even in its widest extent, is too narrow ; which opens up new paths with every step it takes ; which struggles with language in order to wrest from it words enough for its wealth of thought ; which does not lead us, but seizes us and hurries us along, and whose finger cannot touch an object without bruising it to dust. But that which especially gives Fichte's philosophy quite another interest from that of Reinhold, is this, — that in all his inquiries there is a motion, a struggle, an effort, thoroughly to solve the hardest problems of reason. His predecessor never appeared to suspect the existence of these problems — to say nothing of their solution. Fichte's philosophemes are inquiries in which we see the truth before our eyes, and thus they produce knowledge and conviction. Reinhold's philosophemes are exhibitions of results, the production of which goes on behind the scenes. We may believe, but we cannot know ! . . . . . .

" The fundamental element of Fichte's character is the highest honesty. Such a character commonly knows little of delicacy and refinement. In his writings we do not meet with much that is particularly beautiful ; his best passages are always distinguished by greatness and strength. He does not say fine things, but all his words have force and weight. He wants the amiable, kind, attractive, accommodating spirit of Reinhold. His principles are severe, and not much softened by humanity. Nevertheless he suffers what Reinhold could not suffer—contradiction ; and understands what Reinhold could not understand — a joke. His superiority is not felt to be so humiliating as that of Reinhold ; but

if he is called forth, he is terrible. His is a restless spirit, thirsting for opportunity to do great things in the world.

"Fichte's public delivery does not flow on smoothly, sweetly, and softly, as Reinhold's did; it rushes along like a tempest, discharging its fire in separate masses. He does not move the soul as Reinhold did — he rouses it. The one seemed as if he would make men good — the other would make them great. Reinhold's face was mildness, and his form was majesty; Fichte's eye is threatening, and his step daring and defiant. Reinhold's philosophy was an endless polemic against Kantists and Anti-Kantists; Fichte, with his, desires to lead the spirit of the age; he knows its weak side, and therefore he addresses it on the side of politics. He possesses more readiness, more acuteness, more penetration, more genius, — in short, more spiritual power than Reinhold. His fancy is not flowing, but it is energetic and mighty; — his pictures are not charming, but they are bold and massive. He penetrates to the innermost depths of his subject, and moves about in the ideal world with an ease and confidence which proclaim that he not only dwells in that invisible land, but rules there."*

* The following graphic sketch of Fichte's personal appearance and manner of delivery, is taken from the Autobiography of Henry Steffens. Although it refers to a later period of his life, it is thought most appropriate to introduce it here: —

"Fichte appeared, to deliver his introductory lecture on the Destination of Man. This short, strong-built man, with sharp, commanding features, made, I must confess, a most imposing appearance, as I then saw him for the first time. Even his language

Doubts were entertained, even before Fichte's arrival at Jena, that his ardent and active spirit might lead him to use the influence he should acquire over the students for the furtherance of political projects. His supposed democratic opinions were even made a ground of objection to his appointment. And it cannot be affirmed that such anticipations were improbable; for certainly the tendency of his own character, and the peculiar circumstances of the age, presented strong temptations to convert the chair of the professor into the pulpit of the practical philanthropist. He himself says that he was assailed by not a few such temptations, and even invitations, at the beginning of his residence at Jena, but that he resolutely cast them from him. He was

---

had a cutting sharpness. Well acquainted with the metaphysical incapacity of his hearers, he took the greatest possible pains fully to demonstrate his propositions; but there was an air of authoritativeness in his discourse, as if he would remove all doubts by mere word of command. 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'collect yourselves — go into yourselves — for we have here nothing to do with things without, but simply with the inner self.' Thus summoned, the auditors appeared really to go into themselves. Some, to facilitate the operation, changed their position, and stood up; some drew themselves together, and cast their eyes upon the floor: all were evidently waiting under high excitement for what was to follow this preparatory summons. 'Gentlemen,' continued Fichte, 'think the wall' — (*Denken Sie die Wand.*) This was a task to which the hearers were evidently all equal; they thought the wall. 'Have you thought the wall?' asked Fichte. 'Well then, gentlemen, think him who thought the wall.' It was curious to see the evident confusion and embarrassment that now arose. Many of his audience seemed to be utterly unable anywhere to find him who had thought the wall. — Fichte's delivery was excellent, being marked throughout by clearness and precision."

not one of those utilitarian philosophers, who willingly sacrifice high and enduring good to the attainment of some partial and temporary purpose. His idea of the vocation of an academical teacher (set forth at large in the ninth lecture, on the Nature of the Scholar, and its Manifestations), opened to him another field of duty, superior to that of direct political activity. In all his intercourse with his pupils, public or private, his sole object was the development and cultivation of their moral and intellectual powers. No trace can be found of any attempt to lead his hearers upon the stage of actual life, while the opposition between the speculative and practical sides of their nature still existed. To reconcile this opposition was the great object of his philosophy. In his hands, philosophy was no longer speculation, but knowledge — (it was soon divested even of its scholastic terminology, and the *Ego*, *Non-Ego*, &c., entirely laid aside), — the expression of the profoundest thoughts of man on himself, the world, and God; — while, on the other hand, morality was no preceptive legislation, but the natural development of the active principle of our own being, indissolubly bound up with, and indeed the essential root of, its intellectual aspect. Binding together into a common unity every mode and manifestation of our nature, his philosophy is capable of the widest application, and of an almost infinite variety of expression; while in the ceaseless elevation of our *whole* being to higher grades of nobility and greatness, is found at once its intellectual supremacy and its moral power.

So far indeed was Fichte from lending his counte-

nance to political combination among the students, or inculcating any sentiments subversive of the existing arrangements of society, — that no one suffered more than he did, from the clergy on the one hand, and the students on the other, in the attempt to maintain good order in the University. The unions known by the name of *Landsmannschaften* existed at that time in the German schools of learning as they do now, but their proceedings were then marked by much greater turbulence and license than they are at the present day. Riots of the most violent description were of common occurrence ; houses were broken into, and robbed of their contents, to supply the marauders with the means of sensual indulgence. The arm of the law was impotent to restrain these excesses ; and so bold had the unionists become, that upon one occasion, when the house of a professor had been ransacked, five hundred students openly demanded from the Duke an amnesty for the offence. Efforts had been made at various times, by the academical authorities, to suppress these societies, but the students only broke out into more frightful excesses when any attempt was made to restrain their " Burschen-rights," or " Academical freedom." In the hope of effecting some reformation of manners in the University, Fichte commenced, soon after his arrival at Jena, a course of *public* lectures on academical morality. Some of these were afterwards published under the title of " Lectures on the destiny of the Scholar." These lectures, and his own personal influence among the students, were attended with the happiest effects. The three *orders* which then

existed at Jena expressed their willingness to dissolve their union, on condition of the past being forgotten. They delivered over to Fichte the books and papers of their society, for the purpose of being destroyed as soon as he could effect their peace with the Court at Weimar, and receive a commission to administer to them the oath of renunciation, which they would receive from no one but himself. After some delay, caused in part by the authorities of the University, who seem to have been jealous of the success with which an individual professor had accomplished, without assistance, what they had in vain endeavored to effect by threatenings and punishment, the desired arrangements were effected, and the commission arrived. But in consequence of some doubts to which this delay had given rise, one of the three orders drew back from the engagement, and turned with great virulence against Fichte, whom they suspected of deceiving them.

Encouraged, however, by the success which had attended his efforts with the two other orders, Fichte determined to pursue the same course during the winter session of 1794, and to deliver another series of public lectures, calculated to rouse and sustain a spirit of honor and morality among the students. Thoroughly to accomplish his purpose, it was necessary that these lectures should take place at an hour not devoted to any other course, so that he might assemble an audience from among all the different classes. But he found that every hour from 8 A. M. to 7 P. M. was already occupied by lectures on important branches of knowledge. No way seemed open to him but to deliver his moral

discourses on Sundays. Before adopting this plan, however, he made diligent inquiries whether any law, either of the State or of the University, forbade such a proceeding. Discovering no such prohibition, he examined into the practice of other Universities, and found many precedents to justify Sunday-lectures — particularly a course of a similar nature delivered by Gellert at Berlin. He finally asked the opinion of some of the oldest professors, none of whom could see any objection to his proposal, provided he did not encroach upon the time devoted to divine service; — Schütz remarking, "If plays are allowed on Sunday, why not moral lectures?" The hour of divine service in the University was 11 A. M. Fichte therefore fixed upon nine in the morning as his hour of lecture, and commenced his course with most favorable prospects. A large concourse of students from all the different classes thronged his hall, and several of the professors, who took their places among the audience, willingly acknowledged the benefit which they derived from his discourses. But he soon discovered that the best intentions and the most prudent conduct are no protection against calumny. A political print, which had attained an unenviable notoriety for anonymous slander, and had distinguished itself by crawling sycophancy towards power, now exhibited its far-seeing sagacity, by tracing the intimate connection between the Sunday-lectures and the French Revolution, and proclaimed the former to be a "formal attempt to overturn the public religious services of Christianity, and to erect the worship of Reason in their stead!"

Strange to tell, the Consistory of Jena saw it to be their duty to forward a complaint on this subject to the High-Consistory at Weimar; and finally an assembly, in which a Herder sat, lodged an accusation before the Duke and Privy-council against Professor Fichte, for "a deliberate attempt against the public religious services of the country." Fichte was directed to suspend his lectures in the meantime, until inquiry could be made. He immediately met the accusation with a powerful defence, in which he indignantly hurls back the charge, completely demolishing, by a simple narrative of the real facts, every vestige of argument by which it could be supported; and takes occasion to make the Government acquainted with his projects for the moral improvement of the students. The judgment of the Duke is dated 25th January, 1795, and by it Fichte "is freely acquitted of the utterly groundless suspicion which had been attached to him," and confidence is expressed, "that in his future proceedings, he will exhibit such wisdom and prudence as shall entitle him to the continued good opinion" of the Prince. Permission was given him to resume his Sunday-lectures, avoiding the hours of divine service.

But in the meantime, the outrageous proceedings of the party of the students which was opposed to him, rendered it impossible for him to entertain any hope of conciliating them, and soon made his residence at Jena uncomfortable, and even dangerous. His wife was insulted upon the public street, and both his person and property subjected to repeated outrages. He applied to the Senate of the University for protection,

but was informed that the treatment he received was the result of his interference in the affairs of the Orders upon the authority of the State, and without the coöperation of the Senate; that they could do nothing more than *authorize* self-defence in case of necessity; and that if he desired more protection than the Academy could give him, he might apply to his friends at Court. At last, when at the termination of the winter session an attack was made upon his house in the middle of the night, in which his venerable father-in-law narrowly escaped with life, Fichte applied to the Duke for permission to leave Jena. This was granted, and he took up his residence during the summer at the village of Osmanstadt, about two miles from Weimar.

In delightful contrast to the stormy character of his public life at this time, stands the peaceful simplicity of his domestic relations. In consequence of the suddenness of his removal from Zurich, his wife did not accompany him at the time, but joined him a few months afterwards. And her venerable father, too, had been persuaded by his love for his children, to leave his native land, and take up his residence with them at Jena. This excellent old man was the object of Fichte's deepest respect and attachment, and his declining years were watched with all the anxiety of filial tenderness. He died on the 29th of September, 1795, at the age of 76. His remains were accompanied to the grave by Fichte's pupils, as a mark of respect for their teacher's grief, and a simple monument records the affectionate reverence of those he left

behind him. In pure and unbroken attachment, Fichte and his wife partook the calm joys of domestic felicity, and at a later period the smile of childhood added a new charm to their home. A son who was born at Jena was their only child.*

Fichte's intercourse with the eminent men who adorned this brilliant period of German literary history was extensive and important. Preëminent among these stands Goethe, in many respects a remarkable contrast to the philosopher. The one, calm, sarcastic, and oracular; the other, restless, enthusiastic, impetuously eloquent; — the one, looking on men only to scan and comprehend them; the other, waging ceaseless war with their vices, their ignorance, their unworthiness; — the one, seating himself on a chilling elevation above human sympathy, and even exerting all the energies of his mighty intellect, to veil the traces of every feeling which bound him to his fellow-men; the other, from an eminence no less exalted, pouring around him a rushing tide of moral power over his friends, his country, and the world. To the one, men looked up with a painful and hopeless sense of inferiority; they crowded around the other to participate in his wisdom, and to grow strong in gazing on his Titanic might. And even now, when a common destiny has laid the proud gray column in the dust, and stayed the giant's arm from working, we look upon the majesty of the one with astonishment rather than reverence, while at the memory of the

* Now Professor of Philosophy in the University of Tubingen.

other, the pulse of hope beats more vigorously than before, and the tear of patriotism falls heavily on his grave.

Goethe welcomed the Wissenschaftslehre with his usual avidity for new acquisitions. The bold attempt to infuse a living spirit into philosophical formulas, and give reality to speculative abstractions, roused his attention. He requested that it might be sent to him, sheet by sheet, as it went through the press. This was accordingly done, and the following passage from a letter to Fichte will show that he was not disappointed in the expectations he had formed of it:—

"What you have sent me contains nothing which I do not understand, or at least believe that I understand;—nothing that does not readily harmonize with my accustomed way of thinking; and I see the hopes which I had derived from the introduction already fulfilled.

"In my opinion, you will confer a priceless benefit on the human race, and make every thinking man your debtor, by giving a scientific foundation to that upon which nature seems long ago to have quietly agreed with herself. For myself, I shall owe you my best thanks if you reconcile me to the philosophers, whom I cannot do without, and with whom, notwithstanding, I never could unite.

"I look with anxiety for the continuation of your work to adjust and confirm many things for me, and I hope, when you are free from urgent engagements, to speak with with you about several matters, the prosecution of which I defer until I clearly understand how

that which I hope to accomplish may harmonize with what we have to expect from you."

The persoual intercourse of these two great men seems to have been characterized by mutual respect and esteem, without any approach to intimacy. Of one interview Fichte says—"He was politeness, friendship itself; he showed me unusual attention." But no correspondence was maintained between them after Fichte left Jena, in consequence of the proceedings which led to his departure.

Of a more enduring nature was his intimacy with Jacobi. It commenced in a literary correspondence soon after his arrival at Jena. Entertaining a deep respect for this distinguished man, derived solely from the study of his works, Fichte sent him a copy of the Wissenschaftslehre, with a request that he would communicate his opinion of the system it contained. In a long and interesting correspondence, extending over many years, the points of opposition between them were canvassed; and although a radical difference in mental constitution prevented them from ever thinking altogether alike, yet it did not prevent them from cultivating a warm and steadfast friendship, which continued unbroken amid vicissitudes by which other attachments were sorely tried.

Fichte had formed an acquaintance with Schiller at Tubingen, when on his journey to Jena. Schiller's enthusiastic nature assimilated more closely to that of Fichte than did the disposition of the other great poet of Germany, and a cordial intimacy sprang up between them. Fichte was a contributor to the *Horen* from its

commencement — a journal which Schiller began soon after Fichte's arrival at Jena. This gave rise to a singular, but short-lived misunderstanding between them. A paper, entitled "Briefe über Geist und Buchstaben in der Philosophie," had been sent by Fichte for insertion in the Horen. Judging from the commencement alone, Schiller conceived it to be an imitation, or still worse, a parody of his "Briefe über die Æsthetische Erziehung des Menschen," and, easily excited as he was, demanded with some bitterness that it should be re-written. Fichte did not justify himself by producing the continuation of the article, but referred the accusation of parody to the arbitration of Goethe and Humboldt. Schiller was convinced of his error, and soon apologized for it, but Fichte did not return the essay, and it appeared afterwards in the Philosophical Journal. After this slight misunderstanding, they continued upon terms of confidence and friendship, and, towards the close of his life, Schiller became a zealous student of the Wissenschaftslehre.

Fichte likewise carried on an extensive correspondence with Reinhold (who has already been mentioned), Schelling, W. von Humboldt, Schaumann, Paulus, Schmidt, the Schlegels, Novalis, Tieck, Woltmann, besides a host of minor writers, so that his influence extended throughout the whole literary world of Germany at that period.

Fichte has been accused of asperity and superciliousness towards his literary opponents. It may easily be conceived, that, occupying a point of view altogether different from theirs, his philosophy should appear to

him entirely untouched by objections to which they attached great weight. Nor is it surprising that he should choose rather to proceed with the development of his own system from his own principles, than to place himself in the mental position of other men, and combat their arguments upon their own grounds. Those very grounds were the essential cause of their difference. Those who could take their stand beside him would see the matter as he saw it; those who could not do this must remain where they were. Claiming for his system the certainty of mathematical demonstration — asserting that with him philosophy was no longer mere *speculation*, but had now become *knowledge*, he could not bend or accommodate himself or his doctrines to the prejudices of others; — they must come to him, not he to them. "My philosophy," he says "is nothing to Herr Schmidt, from incapacity; his is nothing to me from insight. From this time forth, I look upon all that Herr Schmidt may say, either directly or indirectly, about my philosophy, as something which, so far as I am concerned, has no meaning, and upon Herr Schmidt himself as a philosopher who, in relation to me, is non-existent." That in such disputes Fichte should express himself strongly is not surprising. Even if an excuse could not be found for it in the abuse and persecution with which he was constantly assailed, it might be expected from his very nature. He spoke strongly, because he thought and felt deeply. He was the servant of truth, and it was not for him to mince his language towards her opponents. But it is worthy of remark, that on these

occasions he was never the assailant. In answer to some of Reinhold's expostulations he writes thus: "You say that my tone touches and wounds persons who do not deserve it. That I sincerely regret. But they must deserve it in some degree, if they will not permit one to tell them honestly of the errors in which they wander, and are not willing to suffer a slight shame for the sake of great instruction. With him to whom truth is not above all other things, — above his own petty personality — the Wissenschaftslehre can have nothing to do. The *internal* reason of the tone which I adopt is this: — It fills me with scorn which I cannot describe, when I look upon the present want of any truthfulness of vision, on the deep darkness, entanglement, and perversion, which now prevail. The *external* reason is this: — How have these men (the Kantists) treated me? — how do they continue to treat me? — There is nothing that I have less pleasure in than controversy. Why then can they not be at peace? — For example, friend Schmidt? I have indeed not handled him tenderly; — but every just person who knew much that is not before the public, would give me credit for the mildness of an angel." *

* The following amusing passage, from the commencement of an anonymous publication on this controversy, may serve to show the kind of reputation which Fichte had acquired among his opponents: —

"After the anathemas which the dreadful Fichte has hurled from the height of his philosophic throne upon the ant-hills of the Kantists; looking at the stigma forever branded on the foreheads of these unhappy creatures, which must compel them to hide their existence from the eye of an astonished public; amid the general

The true nature of Fichte's controversialism is well exhibited in a short correspondence with Jakob, the Professor of Philosophy at Halle. Jakob was editor of the "Annalender Philosophie," the chief organ of the Kantists — a journal which had distinguished itself by the most uncompromising attacks upon the Wissenschaftslehre. Fichte had replied in the Philosophical Journal in his usual style. Sometime afterwards Jakob, who was personally unknown to Fichte, addressed a letter to him, full of the most noble and generous sentiments, desiring that, although opposed to each other in principle, all animosity between them might cease. The following passages are extracted from Fichte's reply : —

Fichte to Jakob.

"I have never hated you, nor believed that you hated me. It may sound presumptuous, but it is true, — that I do not know properly what hate is, for I have never hated any one. And I am by no means so passionate as I am commonly said to be. . . . That my Wissenschaftslehre was not understood, — that it is even now not understood (for it is supposed that I now teach

fear and trembling which, spreading over all philosophic sects, casts them to the earth before the thunder-tread of this destroying god, — *who dare now avow himself a Kantist?* I dare — one of the most insignificant creatures ever dropped from the hand of fate. In the deep darkness which surrounds me, and which hides me from every eye in Germany — even from the eagle-glance of a Fichte; from this quiet retreat, every attempt to break in upon the security of which is ridiculous in the extreme, — from here I may venture to raise my voice, and cry, *I am a Kantist!* — and to Fichte — Thou *canst* err, and thou *hast* erred," &c. &c.

other doctrines), I freely believe ; — that it was not understood, on account of my mode of propounding it, in a book which was not designed for the public, but for my own students ; that no trust was reposed in me, but that I was looked upon as a babbler, whose interference in the affairs of philosophy might do hurt to science ; that it was *therefore* concluded that the system which men *knew* well enough that they did not understand, was a worthless system, — all this I know and can comprehend. But it is surely to be expected from every scholar — not that he should understand everything, — but that he should at least know whether he does understand a subject or not ; and of every honest man, that he should not pass judgment on anything before he is conscious of understanding it. . . Dear Jakob ! I have unlimited reverence for openness and uprightness of character. I had heard a high character of you, and I would never have suffered myself to pronounce such a judgment on your literary merit, had I not been afterwards led to entertain an opposite impression. Now, however, by the impartiality of your judgment upon me — by the warm interest you take in me as a member of the republic of letters,* — by your open testimony in my behalf, you have completely won my personal esteem. It shall not be my fault — (allow me to say this without offence) — if you do not also possess my entire esteem as an author, publicly expressed. I have shown B—— and E—— that I can do justice even to an antagonist."

* Jakob had espoused his cause in an important dispute, of which we shall soon have to treat.

Jakob's reply is that of a generous opponent : —

" Your answer, much esteemed Professor, has been most acceptable to me. In it I have found the man whom I wished to find. The differences between us shall be erased from our memory. Not a word of satisfaction to me. If anything that I do or write shall have the good fortune to meet your free and unpurchased approbation, and you find it good to communicate your opinion to the public, it will be gratifying to me ; — for what joy have people of our kind in public life, that is not connected with the approbation of estimable men ? But I shall accept your candid refutation as an equally sure mark of your esteem, and joyfully profit by it. Confutation without bitterness is never unacceptable to me."

Gradually disengaging himself from outward causes of disturbance, Fichte now sought to devote himself more exclusively to literary exertion, in order to embody his philosophy in a more enduring form than that of oral discourses. In 1795 he became joint-editor of the Philosophical Journal, which had for some years been conducted by his friend and colleague Niethammer. His contributions to it form a most important part of his works, and are devoted to the scientific development of his system. In 1796 appeared his " Doctrine of Law," and in 1798 his " Doctrine of Morals," — separate parts of the application which he purposed to make of the fundamental principles of the Wissenschaftslehre to the complete circle of knowledge. But this period of literary tranquillity was des-

tined to be of short duration, for a storm soon burst upon him more violent than any he had hitherto encountered, which once more drove him for a long time from the path of peaceful inquiry into the angry field of polemical discussion.

Atheism is a charge which the common understanding has repeatedly brought against the finer speculations of philosophy, when, in endeavoring to solve the riddle of existence, they have approached, albeit with reverence and humility, the Ineffable Source from which all existence proceeds. Shrouded from human comprehension in an obscurity from which chastened imagination is awed back, and thought retreats in conscious weakness, — the Divine Nature is surely a theme on which man is little entitled to dogmatize. Accordingly, it is here that the philosophic intellect becomes most painfully aware of its own insufficiency. It feels that silence is the most fitting attitude of the finite being towards its Infinite and Incomprehensible Original, and that when it is needful that thought should shape itself into words, they should be those of diffidence and modest self-distrust. But the common understanding has no such humility ;—its God in an Incarnate Divinity ;— imperfection imposes its own limitations on the Illimitable, and clothes the inconceivable Spirit of the Universe in sensuous and intelligible forms derived from finite nature. In the world's childhood — when the monstrous forms of earth were looked upon as the visible manifestations of Deity, or the viewless essences of nature were imagined to contain his presence ; — in the

world's youth — when stream and forest, hill and valley, earth and ocean, were peopled with divinities, graceful or grotesque, kind or malevolent, pure or polluted; — in the world's ages of toil—when the crushed soul of the slave looked to his God for human sympathy, and sometimes fancied that he encountered worse than human oppression; — in all ages, men have colored the brightness of Infinity with hues derived from their own hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, virtues and crimes. And he who felt that the Eidolon of the age was an inadequate representative of his own deeper thoughts of God, had need to place his hopes of justice in futurity, and make up his mind to be despised and rejected by the men of his own day. Socrates drank the poisoned cup because his conceptions of divine things surpassed the mythology of Greece; Christ endured the cross at the hands of the Jews for having told them the truth, which he had heard from the Father; Paul suffered persecution, indignity, and death, for he was a setter forth of strange Gods. Modern times have not been without their martyrs. Descartes died in a foreign land for his bold thought and open speech; Spinoza — the brave, kind-hearted, incorruptible Spinoza — was the object both of Jewish and Christian anathema. From our own land Priestley was banished by popular fanaticism, and in our own days legalized bigotry tore asunder the sacred bonds which united one of the purest and most sensitive of living beings to his offspring—the gentle, imaginative, *deeply-religious* Shelley was an "atheist!" And so, too, Fichte — whose ardent love of freedom made him an

object of distrust and fear to timorous statesmen, and whose daring speculations struck dismay into the souls of creed-bound theologians — found himself assailed at once by religious and political persecution. But in him tyranny once more found a man who had the courage to oppose himself, alone and unfriended, against its hate, and whose steadfast devotion to truth remained unshaken amid all the dangers and difficulties which gathered round his way.

Fichte's theory of God has already been spoken of in a general way. It was the necessary result of his speculative position. The consciousness of the individual reveals *itself* alone ; his knowledge cannot pass beyond the limits of his own being. His conceptions of other things and other beings are only *his* conceptions, — they are not those things or beings themselves. From this point of view the common logical arguments for the existence of God, and in particular what is called the "argument from design" supposed to exist in the material world, entirely disappears. Only from our idea of beauty, and our faith in the inevitable consequences of moral action, arises the belief in a principle of moral order in the world ; — and this principle is God. But this living principle of a living universe must be infinite ; while all our ideas and conceptions are finite, and applicable only to finite beings, not to the Infinite. Even consciousness and personality are the attributes of relative and limited beings ; and to apply these to God, is to bring Him down to the rank of relative and limited being. The Deity is thus not an object of knowledge, but of faith, — not to be ap-

proached by the understanding, but by the moral sense —not to be conceived of, but to be felt. All attempts to embrace the infinite in the conception of the finite, are, and must be, only accommodations to the frailties of man.

The Philosophical Journal for 1798 contained an essay by Forberg "On the definition of the Idea of Religion." Fichte found the principles of this essay not so much opposed to his own, as only imperfect in themselves, and deemed it necessary to prefix to it a paper "On the grounds of our faith in a Divine Government of the world." In this article, after pointing out the imperfections and merely human qualities which are attributed to the Deity in the common conceptions of His being, and which necessarily flow from the "cause and effect" argument in its ordinary applications, he proceeds to state the true grounds of our faith in a moral government or moral order in the universe,— not for the purpose of *inducing* faith by proof, but to show the springs of a faith already present in man, and indestructibly rooted in his nature The business of philosophy is not to create, but to explain; the faith in the divine exists without the aid of philosophy, — it is hers only to investigate its origin, not for the conversion of the infidel, but to explain the conviction of the believer. The sources from which he draws that faith have been noticed already in a previous part of this memoir, and need not be repeated here. The general results of the essay may be gathered from the concluding passage: —

"Hence it is an error to say that it is doubtful

whether or not there is a God. It is not doubtful, but the most certain of all certainties, — nay, the foundation of all other certainties — the one absolutely valid objective truth, — that there is a moral order in the world; that to every rational being is assigned his particular place in that order, and the work which he has to do; that his destiny, in so far as it is not occasioned by his own conduct, is the result of this plan; that in no other way can even a hair fall from his head, nor a sparrow fall to the ground around him; that every true and good action prospers, and every bad action fails; and that all things must work together for good to those who truly love goodness. On the other hand, no one who reflects a moment, and honestly avows the result of his reflection, can remain in doubt that the conception of God as *a particular substance* is impossible and contradictory: and it is right candidly to say this, and to silence the babbling of the schools, in order that the true religion of cheerful virtue may be established in its room.

"Two great poets have expressed this faith of good and thinking men with inimitable beauty. Such an one may adopt their language: —

"'Who dares to say,
"I believe in God"?
Who dares to name him — [*seek ideas and words for him.*]
And to profess,
"I believe in him"?
Who can feel,
And yet affirm,
"I believe him not"?
The All-Embracer, — [*when he is approached through the moral sense, not through theoretical speculation, and the world is looked upon as the scene of living moral activity.*]

The All-Sustainer,
Does he not embrace, support,
Thee, me, himself?
Does not the vault of heaven arch o'er us there?
Does not the earth lie firmly here below?
And do not the eternal stars
Rise on us with their friendly beams?
Do I not see my image in thine eyes?
And does not the All
Press on thy head and heart,
And weave itself around thee, visibly and invisibly,
In eternal mystery?
Fill thy heart with it till it overflow;
And in the feeling, when thou'rt wholly blest,
Then call it what thou wilt, —
Happiness! Heart! Love! God!
I have no name for it:
Feeling is all; name is but sound and smoke,
Veiling the glow of heaven.'*

"And the second sings —

"'And God is! — a holy Will that abides,
Though the human will may falter;
High over both Space and Time it rides,
The high thought that will never alter:
And while all things in change eternal roll,
It endures, through change, a motionless soul.'" †

The publication of this essay furnished a welcome opportunity to those Princes, to whom Fichte was obnoxious on account of his democratic opinions, to institute public proceedings against him. The note

---

* Goethe's "Faust."

† The above stanza of Schiller's "Worte des Glaubens" is taken from Mr. Merivale's excellent translation.

was sounded by the publication of an anonymous pamphlet, entitled "Letters of a Father to his Son on the Atheism of Fichte and Forberg," which was industriously and even *gratuitously* circulated throughout Germany. The first official proceeding was a decree of the Electoral Government, prohibiting the sale of the Philosophical Journal, and confiscating all copies of it found in the electorate. This was followed up by a requisition addressed to the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, as the Conservator of the University of Jena, in which Fichte and Forberg were accused of "the coarsest atheism, openly opposed not only to the Christian, but even to natural, religion;" — and their severe punishment was demanded; failing which, it was threatened that the subjects of the Elector should be prohibited from resorting to the University. These proceedings were imitated by the other Protestant Courts of Germany, that of Prussia excepted.

In answer to the official condemnation of his essay, Fichte sent forth his "Appeal to the Public against the accusation of Atheism," Jena, 1799; — in which, with his accustomed boldness, he does not confine himself to the strict limits of self-defence, but exposes with no lenient hand the true cause which rendered him obnoxious to the Electoral Government — not the atheism of which he was so absurdly accused, but the spirit of freedom and independence which his philosophy inculcated. He did not desire, he would not accept of any compromise; — he demanded a free acquittal or a public condemnation. He adopted the same high tone in his defence before his own Government. The Court

of Weimar had no desire to restrain the liberty of thought, or to erect any barrier against free speculation. It was too wise not to perceive that a Protestant University in which secular power should dare to invade the precincts of philosophy or profane the highest sanctuaries of thought, however great its reputation for the moment, must infallibly sink from being a temple of knowledge into a warehouse for the sale of literary, medical or theological merchandise — a school-room for artisans — a drill-yard for hirelings. But, on the other hand, it was no part of the policy of the Court of Weimar to give offence to its more powerful neighbors, or to enter upon a crusade in defence of opinions obnoxious to the masses, because unintelligible to them. It was therefore intended to pass over this matter as smoothly as possible, and to satisfy the complaining governments by administering to Fitchte a general rebuke for *imprudence* in promulgating his views in language liable to popular misconstruction. The appearance of his "Appeal to the Public," however, rendered this arrangement less easy of accomplishment. The opinion of the Government with respect to this publication was communicated to Fichte in a letter from Schiller, — "that there was no doubt that he had cleared himself of the accusation before every thinking mind ; but that it was surprising that he had not consulted with higher quarters before he sent forth his appeal : why appeal to the public at all, when he had only to do with a favorable and enlightened Government ?" The obvious answer to which was, that the "Appeal to the Public" was a reply to the *public* confiscation

of his work, while the *private* accusation before his Prince was answered by a *private* defence. In that defence the Court found that the accused was determined to push the investigation as far as his accusers could desire, — that he demanded either an honorable and unreserved acquittal, or deposition from his office, as a false teacher. A further breach between the Court and Fichte was caused by a letter which, in the course of these proceedings, he addressed to a member of the Council — his private friend — in which he announced that a resignation of his professorship would be the result of any reproof on the part of the Government. This letter, addressed to an individual in his private capacity, was most unjustifiably placed among the official documents connected with the proceedings. Its tone, excusable perhaps in a private communication, seemed presumptuous and arrogant when addressed to the supreme authority — it was the haughty defiance of an equal, rather than the remonstrance of a subject. This abuse of a private letter — this betrayal of the confidence of friendship — cost Jena its most distinguished professor. On the 2d of April, 1799, Fichte received the decision of the Ducal Court. It contained a reproof for imprudence in promulgating doctrines so unusual and so offensive to the common understanding, and accepted of Fichte's resignation as a recognized consequence of that reproof. It is to be regretted that the policy of the government and the faults of individuals, prevented in this instance the formal recognition of the great principle involved in the contest, *i. e.* that civil governments have no right to restrain the expres-

sion of any theoretical opinion propounded in a scientific form and addressed to the scientific world.

In strong contrast to the feelings of the populace, stands the enthusiastic attachment evinced towards Fichte by the students. Two numerously signed petitions were presented to the Duke, praying for his recall. These having proved unavailing, they caused a medallion of their beloved teacher to be struck, in testimony of their admiration and esteem.

Fichte's position was now one of the most difficult which can well be imagined. A prolonged residence at Jena was out of the question, — he could no longer remain there. But where to turn? — where to seek an asylum? No neighboring state would afford him shelter; even the privilege of a private residence was refused. At length a friend appeared in the person of Dohm, Minister to the King of Prussia. Through him Fichte applied to Frederick-William for permission to reside in his dominions, with a view of earning a livelihood by literary exertion and private teaching. The answer of the Prussian monarch was worthy of his high character: — "If," said he, "Fichte is so peaceful a citizen, and so free from all dangerous associations as he is said to be, I willingly accord him a residence in my dominions. As to his religious principles, it is not for the state to decide upon them." *

* The original phraseology of this last passage is peculiarly characteristic: — "Ist es wahr, dass er mit dem lieben Gotte in Feindseligkeiten begriffen ist; so mag dies der liebe Gott mit ihm abmachen; mir thut das nichts."

Fichte arrived in Prussia in July, 1799, and devoted the summer and autumn to the completion of his "Bestimmung des Menschen." Towards the end of the year he returned to Jena for the purpose of removing his family to Berlin, where, henceforward, he fixed his place of residence. The following extracts are from letters written to his wife during their temporary separation: —

Fichte an Seiner Frau.

"You probably wish to know how I live. For many reasons, the weightiest of which lie in myself and in my cough, I cannot keep up the early rising. Six o'clock is generally my earliest. I go then to my writing desk, so that I am not altogether idle, although I do not get on as I could wish. I am now working at the Bestimmung des Menschen. At half-past twelve I hold my toilet (yes!—get powdered, dressed, &c), and at one I call on M. Veit, where I meet Schlegel and a reformed preacher, Schlegel's friend."* At three I come back, and read a French novel, or write, as I do now to you. If the piece is at all tolerable, which is not always the case, I go to the theatre at five. If it is not, I walk with Schlegel in the suburbs, in the zoological gardens, or under the linden trees before the house. Sometimes I make small country parties with Schlegel and his friends. So we did, for example, the day before yesterday, with the most lively remembrance of thee and the little one. We had no wine to drink your health, — only sour beer, and a slice of black,

* Schleiermacher.

bitter bread, with a thin bit of half-decayed ham stuck upon it with dirty butter. Politeness makes me put up with many things here which are scarcely tolerable But I have thought of a better method for country parties.

"In the evening I sup on a roll of bread and a quart of Medoc wine, which are the only tolerable things in the house; and go to bed between ten and eleven, to sleep without dreaming. Only once — it was after thy first alarming letter — I had my Hermann in my arms, full of joy that he was well again, when suddenly he stretched himself out, turned pale, and all those appearances followed which are indelibly imprinted on my memory.

"I charge thee, dearest, with thy own health and the health of the little one. — Farewell."

* * * * *

"I am perfectly secure here. Yesterday I visited the Cabinet Councillor Beyme, who is daily engaged with the King, and spoke to him about my position. I told him honestly that I had come here in order to take up my abode, and that I sought for safety, because it was my intention that my family should follow me. He assured me, that far from there being any desire to hinder me in this purpose, it would be esteemed an honor and advantage if I made my residence here, — that the King was immovable upon certain principles affecting these questions, &c."

* * * * *

"I work with industry and pleasure. My work on the 'Destiny of Man,' will, I think, be ready at

Michaelmas — written, not printed, — and it seems to me likely to succeed. You know that I am never satisfied with my works when they are first written, and therefore that my own opinion on this point is worth something. . . . . By my residence in Berlin I have gained this much, *that I shall henceforth be allowed to live in peace elsewhere ;* — and this is much. I venture to say that I should have been teazed and perhaps hunted out of any other place. But it is quite another thing now that I have lived in Berlin under the eye of the King. By and by I think even the Weimar Court will learn to be ashamed of its conduct, especially if I make no advances to it. In the meantime something advantageous may happen. So be thou calm and of good courage, dear one, and trust in thy Fichte's judgment, talent, and good fortune. Thou laughst at the last word. Well, well ! — I assure you that good fortune will soon come back again."

* * * * *

"I have written to Reinhold a cold, somewhat upbraiding letter. The good weak soul is full of lamentations. I shall immediately comfort him again, and take care that he is not alienated from me in future. If I was beside thee, thou wouldst say — 'Dost thou hear, Fichte ? thou art proud — I must tell it thee, if no one else can.' Very well, be thou glad that I am proud. Since I have no humility, I must be proud, so that I may have something to carry me through the world."

* * * * *

"Of all that thou writest to me, I am most dissatis-

fied with this, that thou callest our Hermann an ill-bred boy. No greater misfortune could befall me on earth than that this child should be spoiled; and I would lament my absence from Jena only if it should be the cause of that. I adjure thee by thy maternal duties, by thy love to me, by all that is holy to thee, let this child be thy first and only care, and leave everything else for him. Thou art deficient in firmness and coolness; — hence all thy errors in the education of the little one. Teach him that when thou hast once denied him anything, it is determined and irrevocable, and that neither petulance nor the most urgent entreaties will be of any avail: — once fail in this, and you have an ill-taught, obstinate boy, particularly with the natural disposition to strength of character which our little one possesses; and it costs a hundred times more labor to set him right again. For indeed it should be our first care, not to let his character be spoiled; — and believe me, there is in him the capacity of being a wild knave, as well as that of being an honest, true, virtuous man. In particular, do not suppose that he will be led by persuasion and reasoning. The most intelligent men err in this, and thou also in the same way. He cannot think for himself yet, nor will he be able to do so for a long time; — at present, the first thing is that he should learn obedience and subjection to a foreign mind. Thou mayst indeed sometimes gain thy immediate purpose by persuasion, not because he understands thy reasons, and is moved by them, but because thou in a manner submittest thyself to him, and makest him the judge. Thus his pride is flattered; thy talk employs

his vacant time and dispels his caprices. But this is all; — while for the future thou renderest his guidance more difficult for thee, and confirmest thyself in a pernicious prejudice."

* * * * * *

"Cheerfulness and good courage, are to me the highest proof that thou lovest me as I should be loved. Dejection and sorrow are distrust in me, and make me unhappy, because they make thee unhappy. It is no proof of love, that thou shouldst feel deeply the injustice done to me: to me it is a light matter, and so must it be to thee, for thou and I are one.

"Do not speak of dying; indulge in no such thoughts; for they weaken thee, and thus might become true. No! we will yet live with each other many joyful and happy days; and our child shall close our eyes when he is a mature and perfect man: till then he needs us.

"In the progress of my present work, I have taken a deeper glance into religion than ever I did before. In me the emotions of the heart proceed only from perfect intellectual clearness: — it cannot be but that the clearness I have now attained on this subject shall also take possession of my heart.

"Believe me, that to this disposition is to be ascribed, in a great measure, my steadfast cheerfulness, and the mildness with which I look upon the injustice of my opponents. I do not believe that, without this dispute and its evil consequences, I should ever have come to this clear insight and this disposition of heart which I now enjoy; and so the violence we have ex-

perienced has had a result which neither you nor I can regret.

"Comfort the poor boy, and dry thy tears as he bids thee. Think that it is his father's advice, who indeed would say the same thing. And do with our dear Hermann as I wrote thee before. The child is our riches, and we must use him well."

If the spectacle of the scholar contending against the hindrances of fortune and the imperfections of his own nature — struggling with the common passions of mankind and the weakness of his own will — soaring aloft amid the highest speculations of genius, and dragged down again to earth by its coarsest attractions; — if this is one of the most painful spectacles which the theatre of life presents, surely one of the noblest, is when we see such a man pursuing some lofty theme, with a constancy which difficulties cannot shake, nor the whirlwind of passion destroy. Nor is the scene less interesting and instructive, if the inherent nobility of its central figure has drawn around him a few souls of kindred nobleness, whose presence sheds a genial brilliance over a path otherwise solitary, although never dark or doubtful: — Such was now Fichte's position. The first years of his residence at Berlin were among the most peaceful in his life of vicissitude and storm. Uninterrupted by public duties, he now applied his whole powers to the perfecting of his philosophy, surrounded by a small circle of friends worthy of his attachment and esteem. Friedrich and Wilhelm Schlegel, Tieck, Woltmann, Reichhardt and Friedrich Rich-

ter, were among his chosen associates; Bernhardi, with his clear and acute, yet discursive thought, his social graces and warm affections, was his almost daily companion. Hufeland, the king's physician, whom he had known at Jena, now became bound to him by the closest ties, and rendered him many kind offices, over which the delicacy of friendship has thrown a veil. Amid the amenities of such society, and withdrawn from the anxieties and disturbances of public life, Fichte now devoted himself to the development and completion of his philosophic theory. It was during this period of repose that the great characteristic idea of his system first revealed itself to his mind in perfect fulness, and impressed upon his subsequent writings that deeply religious character to which we have formerly adverted. The passage from the circle of subjective reflection to objective and absolute being, which Kant had left unattempted, had hitherto, as we have already seen, been rested by Fichte on the ground of moral feeling only. Our faith in the Divine was the inevitable result of our faith in Duty; it was the imperative demand of our moral nature. But his thoughts were now directed more steadily to the religious aspect of his theory, and he sought to add an intellectual validity to this moral conviction, by a deeper analysis of the fact of consciousness. What is the essential character of our knowledge? It is this:—that it announces itself as a representation of something else, the picture of something superior to and independent of itself. It is thus composed of a double idea:—a higher being which it imperfectly represents; and itself, — inferior to, derived from, and

dependent upon the first. Thus it must renounce the thought of itself as the only being whose existence it reveals, and regard itself rather as the image or reflection of a truly Highest and Ultimate Being revealed in human thought, and indeed its essential foundation. And this idea cannot be got rid of on the ground that it is a merely subjective conception; for we have here reached the primitive essence of thought itself, — and to deny this would be to deny the very nature and conditions of our knowledge, and to maintain an obvious contradiction; — this, namely, — that there can be a conception without an object conceived, a manifestation without substance, and that the ultimate foundation of all things is *nothing*. By this reconciliation, and indeed essential union of the subjective with the objective, reason has finally bridged over the chasm by which analysis had formerly separated it from the simple faith of common humanity. Consciousness becomes the manifestation — the self-revelation of the absolute — *and this only*. The varied forms into which it is broken up, are only more or less perfect modes of this *one* Existence, and the idea of the world as an infinite assemblage of concrete beings, or of coöperative forces, conscious or unconscious, is another phase of the same infinite and absolute Being. But in no case, and from no point of view, is consciousness a purely subjective and empty train of fancies; it contains nothing which does not rest upon and image forth a higher reality; and thus Idealism assumes the form of a sublime and perfected Realism.

This change in the spirit of his philosophy has been

ascribed to the influence of a distinguished contemporary, who now (1845) fills the chair at Berlin, of which Fichte was the first occupant. It seems to us that it was the natural and inevitable result of his own principles and mode of thought. In the development of the system, whether in the mind of its author or in that of any learner, the starting point is necessarily the individual consciousness — the finite *Ego*. But when the logical processes of the understanding have performed their office, and led us from this, the nearest of our spiritual experiences, to that higher point in which finite individuality disappears in the great thought of an all-embracing consciousness — an Infinite *Ego*, — it becomes unnecessary to reiterate the initial steps of the investigation — to imitate the gropings of the school-boy rather than the comprehensive vision of the man. From this higher point of view Fichte now looked out on human life and action, and saw in it no longer the peculiarities of the individual, but the harmonious although diversified manifestation of the one Idea of universal being, — the self-revelation of the Absolute — the infinitely varied forms under which God becomes "manifest in the flesh."

The first traces of this change in his speculative position are observable in his "Bestimmung des Menschen," published in 1799, in which, as we have already said, may be found the most complete exposition of his philosophy which can be communicated in a popular form. In 1801, appeared his "Antwortschreiben an Reinhold," and his "Sonnenklarer Bericht an das grössere Publicum über das eigentliche Wesen der

neuesten Philosophie." These he intended to follow up in 1082 with a more strictly scientific and complete account of the "Wissenchaftslehre," designed for the philosophical reader only. But he was induced to postpone this purpose, partly on account of the recent modification of his own philosophical point of view, and partly because of the existing state of the literary world, in which Schelling's Natur-Philosophie was now making rapid progress. Before communicating to the world the work which should be handed down to posterity as the finished institute of his theory, it appeared to him necessary, first of all to prepare the public mind for its reception by a series of introductory applications of his system to subjects of general interest. But this purpose was likewise laid aside for a time, — principally, it would seem, from uncertainty as to the mode in which he should communicate with the world, and perhaps also from a certain degree of dissatisfaction with the reception which his works had hitherto received. These feelings occasioned a silence of four years on his part, and are characteristically expressed in the preface to the following Lectures.

In the meantime, although Fichte retired for a season from the prominent position which he had hitherto occupied in the public eye, it was impossible for him to remain inactive. Shut out from communication with the "*reading* public," he sought to gather around him fit *hearers* to whom he might impart the high message with which he was charged. This was, indeed his favorite mode of communication : in the lecture-room his fiery eloquence found a freer scope than the form of

a literary work would permit. A circle of pupils soon gathered around him at Berlin. His private lectures were attended by the most distinguished scholars and statesmen: W. Schlegel and Kotzebue, the Minister Schrotter, the High Chancellor Beyme, and the Minister von Altenstein, might be found among his auditory.

In 1804 an opportunity presented itself of resuming his favorite vocation of an academic teacher. This was an invitation from Russia to assume the chair of Philosophy in the University of Charkow. The existing state of literary culture in that country, however, did not seem to offer any promising field for his exertions; and another proposal, which appeared to open the way to a more useful application of his powers occurring at the same time, he declined the invitation from Charkow. The second invitation was likewise a foreign one,—from Bavaria, namely, to the Philosophic chair at Landshut. It was accompanied by pecuniary proposals of a most advantageous nature. But experience had taught Fichte to set a much higher value upon the internal conditions of such an office, than upon its outward advantages. In desiring an academic chair, he sought only an opportunity of carrying out his plan of a strictly philosophical education, with a view to the future reception of the Wissenchaftslehre in its most perfect form. To this purpose he had devoted his life, and no pecuniary consideration could induce him to lay it aside. But its thorough fulfilment demanded absolute freedom of teaching and writing as its primary condition, and this was therefore the first point to which Fichte looked in any appointment which might be offered to him. He

frankly laid his views on this subject before the Bavarian Government. "This plan," he says, "might perhaps be carried forward without the support of any government, although this has its difficulties. But if any enlightened government should resolve to support it, it would, in my opinion, acquire thereby a deathless fame, and become the benefactor of humanity." Whether the Bavarian Government was dissatisfied with the conditions required does not appear, — but the negotiations on this subject were shortly afterwards broken off.

At last, however, an opportunity occurred of carrying out his views in Prussia itself. Through the influence of his friends Beyme and Altenstein with the Minister Hardenberg, he was appointed Professor of Philosophy at the University of Erlangen, with the liberty of returning to Berlin during the winter to continue his philosophic lectures there. In May, 1805, he entered upon his new duties with a brilliant success, which seemed to promise a repetition of the epoch of Jena. Besides the course of lectures to his own students, in which he took a comprehensive survey of the conditions and method of scientific knowledge in general, he delivered a series of private lectures to his fellow professors and others, in which he laid down his views in a more abstract form. In addition to these labors, he delivered to the whole students of the University his celebrated lectures on the "Nature of the Scholar." These remarkable discourses must have had a powerful effect on the young and ardent minds to which they were addressed. Never, perhaps, were the moral dignity and sacredness of the literary calling set forth with more impressive earnestness.

Encouraged by the brilliant success which had attended his prelections at Erlangen, Fichte now resolved to give forth to the world the results of his later studies, and especially to embody, in some practical and generally intelligible form, his great conception of the eternal revelation of God in consciousness. Accordingly, on his return to Berlin in the winter of 1805–6, he published the course of lectures we have just alluded to, on the "Nature of the Scholar," followed soon after by another course which had been delivered at Berlin during the previous year, under the title of "Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters." Of the first of these a translation is now offered to the English reader. The Scholar is here represented as he who, possessed and actuated by the Divine Idea, labors to obtain for that Idea an outward manifestation in the world, either by communicating it to his fellow-men (as Teacher); or by directly embodying it in visible forms (as Ruler, Lawgiver, Statesman, &c.) The second course is an application of the same great principle to General History, abounding in profound and comprehensive views of the history, prospects, and destiny of man. This series of popular works was completed by the publication in the spring of 1806, of the "Anweisung zum Seligen Leben, oder die Religionslehre;" the most important of all his later writings, which contains the final results of his philosophy in its most exalted application.

Fichte's long-cherished hopes of founding an academical institution in accordance with his philosophical views, seemed now about to be realized. During the winter

vacation, Hardenberg communicated with him on the subject of a new organization of the University at Erlangen. Fichte drew up a plan for this purpose, which was submitted to the Minister in 1806. But fortune again interposed; the outbreak of the war with France prevented his resuming the duties which had been so well begun.

The campaign of 1805 had subjected the greater part of Germany to the power of Napoleon. Prussia, almost alone, maintained her independence, surrounded on every side by the armies or vassals of France. Her struggle with the giant-power of the continent was of short duration. On the 9th October, 1806, war was declared — on the 14th the double battle of Auerstadt and Jena was fought — and on the 21st Napoleon entered Berlin. In rapid succession, all the fortresses of Prussia fell into the hands of the invader.

Fichte eagerly desired permission to accompany the army which his country sent forth against her invaders. The hopes of Germany hung upon its progress; its success would bring freedom and peace, — its failure, military despotism, with all its attendant horrors. Opposed to the well-trained troops of France, elated with victory and eager for new conquests, the defenders of Germany needed all the aid which high principle and ardent patriotism could bring to their cause. To maintain such a spirit in the army by such addresses as afterwards appeared under the celebrated title of "Reden an die Deutschen," Fichte conceived to be his appropriate part in the general resistance to the enemy; and for that purpose he desired to be near the troops.

"If the orator," he says, "must content himself with speech — if he cannot fight in your ranks to prove the truth of his principles by his actions, by his contempt of danger and of death, by his presence in the most perilous places of the combat, — this is only the fault of his age, which has separated the calling of the scholar from that of the warrior. But he feels that if he had been taught to carry arms, he would have been behind none in courage; he laments that his age has denied him the privilege accorded to Æschylus and Cervantes, to make good his words by manlike deeds. He would restore that time if he could; and in the present circumstances, which he looks upon as bringing with them a new phase of his existence, he would proceed rather to deeds than to words. But since he may only speak, he would speak fire and sword. Nor would he do this securely and away from danger. In his discourses he would give utterance to truths belonging to this subject with all the clearness with which he himself sees them, with all the earnestness of which he is capable, — utter them avowedly and with his own name, — truths which should cause him to be held worthy of death before the tribunal of the enemy. And on that account he would not faint-heartedly conceal himself, but speak boldly before your face, that he might either live free in his fatherland, or perish in its overthrow."

The rapid progress of the war prevented compliance with his wish, but the spirit which gave it birth was well appreciated by Frederick-William. "Your idea, dear Fichte," says the reply to his proposal, "does you

honor. The King thanks you for your offer; — perhaps we may make use of it afterwards. But the King must first speak to his army by deeds: then eloquence may increase the advantages of victory."

The defeat of Jena, and the rapid march of Napoleon upon Berlin, which remained defenceless, rendered it necessary for all who had identified themselves with the cause of their country to seek refuge in instant flight. Fichte's resolution was soon taken: — he would share the dangers of his fatherland, rather than purchase safety by submission. Fichte's wife remained in Berlin to take charge of their own and of Hufeland's household, while the two friends fled beyond the Oder.

Fichte now took up his residence at Königsberg to await the result of the war. The uncertainty of his future prospects, and the dangerous situation in which he had left his family, did not prevent him from pursuing his vocation as a public teacher, even in the face of many hindrances. During the winter he delivered a course of philosophical lectures in the University, having been appointed provisional professor of philosophy during his residence. He steadfastly resisted the earnest desire of his wife to return to Berlin during its occupancy by the French, conceiving it to be his duty to submit to every privation and discomfort, rather than give an indirect sanction to the presence of the enemy by sitting down quietly under their rule, although he could now do so with perfect safety to himself. "Such a return," he says, "would stand in direct contradiction to the declarations made in my address to the King,

of which address my present circumstances are the result. And if no other keep me to my word, it is just so much more my duty to hold myself to it. It is precisely when other scholars of note in our country are wavering, that he who has been hitherto true, should stand the firmer in his uprightness."

The consequences of the battle of Eylau (8th February, 1807) rendered his residence in Königsberg no longer safe or desirable. He therefore removed to Copenhagen, where he arrived on the 9th of July, having been detained for some weeks at Memel, and on sea, by contrary winds. Soon after this, peace being at length concluded, and Berlin evacuated, he returned to his family towards the end of August.

With the return of peace, the Prussian Government determined to repair the loss of political importance, by fostering among its citizens the desire of intellectual distinction and the love of free speculation. It seemed to the eminent men who then stood around the throne of Frederick-William, that the temple of German independence had now to be rebuilt from its foundations; that the old stock of liberty having withered or been swept away in the tornado which had just passed over their heads, a new growth must take its place, springing from a deeper root and quickened by a fresher stream. One of the first means which suggested itself for the attainment of this purpose, was the establishment at Berlin of a new school of higher education, free from the imperfections of the old Universities, from which, as from the spiritual heart of the community, a current of life and energy might be poured forth

through all its members. Fichte was chosen by the Minister as the man before all others fitted for this task, and unlimited power was given him to frame for the new University a constitution which should ensure its efficiency and success. No employment could have been more congenial to Fichte's inclinations; — it presented him at last with the long-wished-for opportunity of developing a systematic plan of human instruction, founded on the spiritual nature of man. He entered with ardor upon the undertaking, and towards the end of 1807 his plan was completed, and laid before the Minister. Its chief feature was its perfect unity of purpose — the complete subordination of every branch of instruction to the one great object of all teaching, — not the inculcation of opinion, but the spiritual culture and elevation of the individual. The institution was to be an organic whole; — not a mere assemblage of teachers holding various and perhaps opposite views, and living only to disseminate these — but of men with a common purpose, steadily pursuing one recognized object. The office of the Professor was not to repeat verbally what already stood printed in books, and might be found there, but to exercise a diligent supervision over the studies of the pupil, and see that he fully acquired, by his own effort, and as a personal and independent possession, the branch of knowledge which was the object of his studies. It was thus *a school for the scientific use of the understanding*, in which positive or historical knowledge was to be looked upon only as a vehicle of instruction, not as the ultimate end: — spiritual independence, intellectual strength,

moral dignity — these were the great ends to the attainment of which everything else was but a means. The plan met with distinguished approbation from the Minister to whom it was presented; and if, when the University was actually established some time afterwards, the ordinary and more easily fulfilled constitution of such schools was followed, it is to be attributed to the management of the undertaking having passed into other hands, and to the difficulty of finding teachers who would coöperate in the accomplishment of the scheme.

But the misfortunes of his country induced Fichte to make a yet more direct attempt to rouse the fallen spirit of liberty, and once more to awaken in the hearts of his countrymen the desire of independence, which now lay crushed beneath a foreign yoke. Prussia was the last forlorn hope of German freedom, and it now seemed to lie almost at the mercy of the conqueror. Fichte was well aware of the dangers attending any open attempt to excite a spirit of opposition to the French, but he was not accustomed to weigh danger against duty: with him there was but short pause between conviction and action. "The sole question," said he to himself, "is this:—canst thou hope that the good to be attained is greater than the danger? The good is the re-awakening and elevation of the people; against which my personal danger is not to be reckoned, but for which it may rather be most advantageously incurred. My family and my son shall not want the support of the nation, — the least of the advantages of having a martyr for their father. This is

the best choice. I could not devote my life to a better end."

Thus heroically resolved that he, at least, should not be wanting in his duty to his fatherland, he delivered his celebrated "Reden an die Deutschen" — (*Addresses to the German People*) — in the academical buildings in Berlin, during the winter of 1807–8. His voice was often drowned by the trumpets of the French troops, and well-known spies frequently made their appearance among his auditory; but he continued, undismayed, to direct all the fervor of his eloquence against the despotism of Napoleon, and the system of spoiling and oppression under which his country groaned. It is somewhat singular, that while Davoust threatened the chief literary men of Berlin with vengeance if they should either speak or write upon the political state of Germany, Fichte should have remained unmolested — the only one who did speak out, openly and fearlessly, against the foreign yoke.

This spirit-stirring course of public activity was interrupted by a severe illness, which attacked him in the spring of 1808. It was his first illness, and it took so determined a hold of his powerful constitution, that he never thoroughly got rid of its effects. Deep-seated nervous disease, and particularly an affection of the liver, reduced him to great weakness, and for a long time it seemed doubtful whether his life could be saved. It was only after some months of suffering that the disease settled down upon a particular limb, and left him with a rheumatic lameness of the left arm and right foot, which, with an accompanying inflammation in the

eyes, hindered him for a long time from resuming his habits of active life. He was removed several times to the baths of Teplitz with beneficial effect. The tedium of convalescence was relieved by study of the great authors of Italy, Spain, and Portugal. At an earlier period of his life, he had made himself acquainted with the languages of these countries, and had produced many translations from their poets, particularly an entire version of the first canto of Dante's Divina Commedia,* and of one of the most beautiful episodes in the Lusiad of Camoens. And now, in the season of debility and pain, the noble thoughts handed down by the great poets of the south as an everlasting possession to the world, became to him the springs of new strength and dignity. Nor did he cease altogether from direct endeavors for the good of his fellow-men. Even on the sick-bed, he found means of affording relief and encouragement to Ernst Wagner, a true and warm-hearted friend of his country and of all good men, but whose spirit was crushed almost to hopelessness by the pressure of disease and penury.

Considerable doubts had arisen as to the propriety of placing the new University in a large city like Berlin. It was urged that the metropolis presented too many temptations to idleness and dissipation to render it an eligible situation for a seminary devoted to the education of young men. This was the view entertained by the Minister Stein, but warmly combated by Wolff, Fichte, and others. Stein was at length won

* Printed in the "Vesta" for 1807.

over, and the University was opened in 1810. The King gave one of the finest palaces of Berlin for the purpose, and all the appliances of mental culture were provided on the most liberal scale. Learned men of the greatest eminence in their respective departments were invited from all quarters—Wolff, Fichte, Müller, Humboldt, De Wette, Schleiermacher, Neander, Klaproth, and Savigny — higher names than these cannot easily be found in their peculiar walks of literature and science. By the suffrages of his fellow-teachers, Fichte was unanimously elected Rector.

Thus placed at the head of an institution from which so much was expected, Fichte labored unceasingly to establish a high tone of moral feeling in the new University, convinced that thereby he should best promote the dignity as well as the welfare of his country. His dearest wish was to see Germany *free*—free alike from foreign oppression, and from internal reproach. He longed to see the stern sublimity of old Greek citizenship reappear among a people whom the conquerors of Greece had failed to subdue. And therefore it was before all things necessary that they who were to go forth as the apostles of truth and virtue, who were to be the future representatives among the people of all that is dignified and sacred, should themselves be deeply impressed with the high nature of their calling, and keep unsullied the honor which must guide and guard them in the discharge of its duties. He therefore applied himself to the reformation of such features in the student-life as seemed irreconcilable with its nobleness, — to the suppression of the Landsmannschaften, and of the

practice of duelling. Courts of honor, composed of the students themselves, decided upon all such quarrels as had usually led to personal encounters. During his two years' rectorship, Fichte laid the foundation of the character which the University still maintains, of being the best regulated, as well as one of the most efficient schools in Germany.

The year 1812 was an important one for Europe, and particularly for Germany. The gigantic power of Napoleon had now reached its culminating point. Joseph Bonaparte reigned at Madrid, and Murat at Naples; — Austria was subdued, and the fair daughter of the House of Hapsburg had united her fate to that of the conqueror of her race; — Prussia lay at his mercy; — Holland and the Free towns were annexed to the territory of France, which now extended from Sicily to Denmark. One thing alone was wanting to make him sole master of the continent of Europe, and that was the conquest of Russia. His passion for universal dominion led him into the great military error of his life,—the attempt to conquer a country defended by its climate from his power, and which, even if subdued, could never have been retained. He rushed on to the fate which sooner or later awaits unbridled ambition. The immense armies of France were poured through Germany upon the North, to find a grave amid the snows of Smolensk, or in the waters of the Berezina.

And now Prussia resolved to make a decisive effort to throw off a yoke which had always been hateful to her. The charm was now broken which made men

look on the might of Napoleon as invincible ; — the unconquerable battalions had been routed ; fortune had turned against her former favorite. The King entered into alliance with the Russian Emperor, and in January 1813, having retired from Berlin to Breslau, he sent forth a proclamation, calling upon the youth of the country to arm themselves in defence of its liberty. Nobly was his appeal responded to. The nation rose as one man ; all distinctions were forgotten in the high enthusiasm of the time ; prince and peasant, teacher and scholar, artisan and merchant, poet and philosopher, swelled the ranks of the army of liberation.

Fichte now renewed his former application to be permitted to accompany the troops, in the capacity of preacher or orator, that he might share their dangers, and animate their courage. Difficulties arising in the way of this arrangement, he resolved to remain at his post in Berlin, and to continue his lectures until he and his scholars should be called personally to the defence of their country. The other professors united with him in a common agreement, that the widows and children of such of their number as fell in the war should be provided for by the cares of the survivors. It is worthy of remark, that amid this eager enthusiasm, Fichte resolutely opposed the adoption of any proceedings against the enemy which might cast dishonor on the sacred cause of freedom. While a French garrison still held Berlin, one of his students revealed to him a plan for firing their magazine during the night. Fichte immediately disclosed the whole to the superintendent of police, by whose timely interference the scheme was defeated.

During the summer of 1813, Fichte delivered from the Academical Chair those views of the existing circumstances of his country, and of the war in which it was engaged, which he was prevented from communicating to the army directly. These lectures were afterwards printed, under the title of "Ueber den Begriff des wahren Kriegs," — (*On the idea of a true war.*) With a clearness and energy of thought which seemed to increase with the difficulties and danger of his country, he roused an irresistible opposition to proposals of peace which, through the mediation of Austria, were offered during the armistice in June and July. The demands of Napoleon left Germany only a nominal independence; a brave and earnest people sought for true freedom. "A stout heart and no peace," was Fichte's motto, and his countrymen agreed with him. Hostilities were re-commenced in August, 1813.

In the beginning of the winter half-year, Fichte resumed his philosophical prelections at the University. His subject was an introduction to philosophy upon an entirely new plan, which should render his system much more easily attainable. He had now accomplished the great object of his life,—the completion, in his own mind, of that scheme of knowledge by which his name was to be known to posterity. Existing in his own thought as one clear and comprehensive whole, he believed that he could now communicate it to others, in a simpler and more intelligible form than it had yet assumed. It was therefore his intention to devote the following summer to this purpose, and leave behind him a finished record of his philosophy in its

maturity and completeness. But fate had ordered otherwise.

The vicinity of Berlin to the seat of the great struggle on which the liberties of Germany were depending, rendered it the most eligible place for the reception of the wounded and diseased. The hospitals of the city were crowded, and the ordinary attendants of these establishments were found insufficient in number to supply the wants of the patients. The authorities therefore called upon the inhabitants for their assistance, and Fichte's wife was one of the first who responded to the call. The noble and generous disposition which had rendered her the worthy companion of the philosopher, now led her forth, regardless of danger, to give all her powers to woman's holiest ministry. Not only did she labor with unresisting assiduity to assuage the bodily sufferings of the wounded, and to surround them with every comfort which their situation required, and which she had the power to supply; she likewise poured words of consolation into many a breaking heart, and awakened new strength and faithfulness in those who were 'ready to perish.'

For five months she pursued with uninterrupted devotion her attendance at the hospitals, and, although not naturally of a strong constitution, she escaped the contagion which surrounded her. But on the 3d of January, 1814, she was seized with a nervous fever, which speedily rose to an alarming height, so that almost every hope of her recovery was lost. Fichte's affection never suffered him to leave her side, except during the time of his lectures. It is an astonishing

proof of his self-command, that after a day of anxious watching at the death-bed, as it seemed, of her he held dearest on earth, he should be able to address his class in the evening, for two consecutive hours, on the most profound and abstract subjects of human speculation,—uncertain whether, on his return, he might find that loved one still alive. At last, the crisis of the fever was past, and Fichte received again the faithful partner of his cares, rescued from the grave.

But even in this season of joy, in the embrace of gratulation he received the seeds of death. Scarcely was his wife pronounced out of danger, than he himself caught the infection, and was attacked by the insidious disease. Its first symptom was nervous sleeplessness, which resisted the effect of baths, and the other usual remedies. Soon, however, the true nature of the malady was no longer doubtful, and during the rapid progress of his illness, his lucid moments became shorter and less frequent. In one of these he was told of Blucher's passage of the Rhine, and the final expulsion of the French from Germany. That spirit-stirring information touched a chord that roused him from his unconsciousness, and he awoke to a bright and glorious vision of a better future for his fatherland. The triumphant excitement mingled itself with his fevered fancies: — he imagined himself in the midst of the victorious struggle, striking for the liberties of Germany ;—and then again it was against his own disease that he fought, and power of will and firm resolution were the arms by which he was to conquer it. Shortly before his death, when his son approached him

with medicine, he said, with his usual look of deep affection — "Let it alone; I need no more medicine: I feel that I am well." On the eleventh day of his illness, on the night of the 27th January, 1814, he died. The last hours of his life were passed in deep and unbroken sleep.

Fichte died in his fifty-second year, with his bodily and mental faculties unimpaired by age; scarcely a grey hair shaded the deep black upon his bold and erect head. In stature he was low, but powerful and muscular. His step was firm, and his whole appearance and address bespoke the rectitude, firmness, and earn estness of his character

His widow survived him for five years. By the kindness of the Monarch she was enabled to pass the remainder of her life in ease and competence, devoting herself to the superintendence of her son's education. She died on the 29th January, 1819, after an illness of seven days.

Fichte died as he had lived, — the priest of knowledge, the apostle of freedom, the martyr of humanity. His character stands written in his life, a massive but severely simple whole. It has no parts; — the depth and earnestness on which it rests, speak forth alike in his thoughts, words, and actions. No man of his time— few perhaps of any time — exercised a more powerful, spirit-stirring influence over the minds of his fellow-countrymen. The impulse which he communicated to the national thought, extended far beyond the sphere of his personal influence; — it has awakened — it will

still awaken — high emotion and manly resolution in thousands who never heard his voice. The ceaseless effort of his life was to rouse men to a sense of the divinity of their own nature — to fix their thoughts upon a spiritual life, as the only true and real life — to teach them to look upon all else as mere show and unreality, and thus to lead them to constant effort after the highest Ideal of purity, virtue, independence and self-denial. To this ennobling enterprise he consecrated his being; to it he devoted his gigantic powers of thought, his iron will, his resistless eloquence. But he also taught it in deeds more eloquent than words. In the strong reality of his life, — in his intense love for all things beautiful and true, — in his incorruptible integrity and heroic devotion to the right, we see a living manifestation of his principles. His life is the true counterpart of his philosophy; — it is that of a strong, free, incorruptible man. And with all the sternness of his morality, he is full of gentle and generous affections, of deep, overflowing sympathies. No tone of love, no soft breathing of tenderness, fall unheeded on that high, royal soul, but in its calm sublimity find a welcome and a home. Even his hatred is the offspring of a higher love. Truly indeed has he been described by one of our own country's brightest ornaments, as a "colossal, adamantine spirit, standing erect and clear, like a Cato Major among degenerate men; fit to have been the teacher of the Stoa, and to have discoursed of beauty and virtue in the groves of Academe." But the sublimity of his intellect casts no shade on the soft current of his affections, which flows, pure and unbroken, through the

whole course of his life, to enrich, fertilize, and adorn it. In no other man of modern times do we find the stern grandeur of ancient virtue so blended with the kindlier humanities of our nature, which flourish best under a gentler civilization. We prize his philosophy deeply ; it is to us an invaluable possession, for it seems the noblest exposition to which we have yet listened, of human nature and divine truth ; but with reverent thankfulness we acknowledge a still higher debt, for he has left behind him the best gift which man can bequeath to man — a brave, heroic human life.

In the first churchyard from the Oranienburg gate of Berlin, stands a tall obelisk with this inscription : —

THE TEACHERS SHALL SHINE
AS THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE FIRMAMENT ;
AND THEY THAT TURN MANY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS
AS THE STARS FOR EVER AND EVER.

It marks the grave of FICHTE. The faithful partner of his life sleeps at his feet.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

This book is under no circumstances to be taken from the Building

Form 410